

***The Collected Earlier Poems of***

**WILLIAM  
CARLOS  
WILLIAMS**

**A NEW DIRECTIONS BOOK**

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Manufactured in the United States by  
The Haddon Craftsmen, Inc , Scranton, Pa.  
New Directions Books are published by James Laughlin  
at Norfolk, Connecticut. New York Office: 333 Sixth Avenue (14)  
Designed by Maurice Serle Kaplan

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## ***Acknowledgments***

The poems from *An Early Martyr* and *Adam & Eve & The City* are included through the courtesy of Ronald Land Latimer of the Alcestis Press, who first published them in limited editions.



## ***The Wanderer***



# ***The Wanderer***

A ROCOCO STUDY

## ***ADVENT***

Even in the time when as yet  
I had no certain knowledge of her  
She sprang from the nest, a young crow,  
Whose first flight circled the forest.  
I know now how then she showed me  
Her mind, reaching out to the horizon,  
She close above the tree tops.  
I saw her eyes straining at the new distance  
And as the woods fell from her flying  
Likewise they fell from me as I followed  
So that I strongly guessed all that I must put from me  
To come through ready for the high courses.

But one day, crossing the ferry  
With the great towers of Manhattan before me,  
Out at the prow with the sea wind blowing,  
I had been wearying many questions  
Which she had put on to try me:  
How shall I be a mirror to this modernity?  
When lo! in a rush, dragging  
A blunt boat on the yielding river—  
Suddenly I saw her! And she waved me  
From the white wet in midst of her playing!  
She cried me, "Haia! Here I am, son!  
Sec how strong my little finger is!  
Can I not swim well?  
I can fly too!" And with that a great sea-gull  
Went to the left, vanishing with a wild cry—  
But in my mind all the persons of godhead  
Followed after.

## CLARITY

"Come!" cried my mind and by her might  
That was upon us we flew above the river  
Seeking her, grey gulls among the white—  
In the air speaking as she had willed it;  
"I am given," cried I, "now I know it!  
I know now all my time is forespent!  
For me one face is all the world!  
For I have seen her at last, this day,  
In whom age in age is united—  
Indifferent, out of sequence, marvelously!  
Saving alone that one sequence  
Which is the beauty of all the world, for surely  
Either there in the rolling smoke spheres below us  
Or here with us in the air intercircling,  
Certainly somewhere here about us  
I know she is revealing these things!"  
And as gulls we flew and with soft cries  
We seemed to speak, flying, "It is she  
The mighty, recreating the whole world,  
This is the first day of wonders!

She is attiring herself before me—  
Taking shape before me for worship,  
A red leaf that falls upon a stone!  
It is she of whom I told you, old  
Forgiveless, unreconcilable;  
That high wanderer of by-ways  
Walking imperious in beggary!  
At her throat is loose gold, a single chain  
From among many, on her bent fingers  
Are rings from which the stones are fallen,  
Her wrists wear a diminished state, her ankles  
Are bare! Toward the river! Is it she there?"  
And we swerved clamorously downward—  
"I will take my peace in her henceforth!"

## BROADWAY

It was then she struck—from behind,  
In mid air, as with the edge of a great wing!  
And instantly down the mists of my eyes  
There came crowds walking—men as visions  
With expressionless, animate faces;  
Empty men with shell-thin bodies  
Jostling close above the gutter,  
Hasting—nowhere! And then for the first time  
I really saw her, really scented the sweat  
Of her presence and—fell back sickened!  
Ominous, old, painted—  
With bright lips, and lewd Jew's eyes  
Her might strapped in by a corset  
To give her age youth, perfect  
In her will to be young she had covered  
The godhead to go beside me.  
Silent, her voice entered at my eyes  
And my astonished thought followed her easily:  
“Well, do their eyes shine, do their clothes fit?  
These live I tell you! Old men with red cheeks,  
Young men in gay suits! See them!  
Dogged, quivering, impassive—  
Well—are these the ones you envied?”  
At which I answered her, “Marvelous old queen,  
Grant me power to catch something of this day's  
Air and sun into your service!  
That these toilers after peace and after pleasure  
May turn to you, worshippers at all hours!”  
But she sniffed upon the words warily—  
Yet I persisted, watching for an answer:  
“To you, horrible old woman,  
Who know all fires out of the bodies  
Of all men that walk with lust at heart!  
To you, O mighty, crafty prowler

After the youth of all cities, drunk  
With the sight of thy archness! All the youth  
That come to you, you having the knowledge  
Rather than to those uninitiate—  
To you, marvelous old queen, give me always  
A new marriage—”

But she laughed loudly—  
“A new grip upon those garments that brushed me  
In days gone by on beach, lawn, and in forest!  
May I be lifted still, up and out of terror,  
Up from before the death living around me—  
Torn up continually and carried  
Whatever way the head of your whim is,  
A burr upon those streaming tatters—”  
But the night had fallen, she stilled me  
And led me away.

### *THE STRIKE*

At the first peep of dawn she roused me!  
I rose trembling at the change which the night saw!  
For there, wretchedly brooding in a corner  
From which her old eyes glittered fiercely—  
“Go!” she said, and I hurried shivering  
Out into the deserted streets of Paterson.  
That night she came again, hovering  
In rags within the filmy ceiling—  
“Great Queen, bless me with thy tatters!”  
“You are blest, go on!”

“Hot for savagery,  
Sucking the air! I went into the city,  
Out again, baffled onto the mountain!  
Back into the city!

Nowhere  
The subtle! Everywhere the electric!”



"A short bread-line before a hitherto empty tea shop:  
No questions—all stood patiently,  
Dominated by one idea: something  
That carried them as they are always wanting to be carried,  
'But what is it,' I asked those nearest me,  
'This thing heretofore unobtainable  
'That they seem so clever to have put on now!'

"Why since I have failed them can it be anything but their  
own brood?

Can it be anything but brutality?  
On that at least they're united! That at least  
Is their bean soup, their calm bread and a few luxuries!

"But in me, more sensitive, marvelous old queen  
It sank deep into the blood, that I rose upon  
The tense air enjoying the dusty fight!  
Heavy drink where the low, sloping foreheads  
The flat skulls with the unkempt black or blond hair,  
The ugly legs of the young girls, pistons  
Too powerful for delicacy!  
The women's wrists, the men's arms red  
Used to heat and cold, to toss quartered beeves  
And barrels, and milk-cans, and crates of fruit!

"Faces all knotted up like burls on oaks,  
Grasping, fox-snouted, thick-lipped,  
Sagging breasts and protruding stomachs,  
Rasping voices, filthy habits with the hands.  
Nowhere you! Everywhere the electric!

"Ugly, venomous, gigantic!  
Tossing me as a great father his helpless  
Infant till it shriek with ecstasy  
And its eyes roll and its tongue hangs out!—

"I am at peace again, old queen, I listen clearer now."

## ABROAD

Never, even in a dream,  
Have I winged so high nor so well  
As with her, she leading me by the hand,  
That first day on the Jersey mountains!  
And never shall I forget  
The trembling interest with which I heard  
Her voice in a low thunder:  
"You are safe here. Look child, look open-mouth!  
The patch of road between the steep bramble banks,  
The tree in the wind, the white house there, the sky!  
Speak to men of these, concerning me!  
For never while you permit them to ignore me  
In these shall the full of my freed voice  
Come grappling the ear with intent!  
Never while the air's clear coolness  
Is seized to be a coat for pettiness;  
Never while richness of greenery  
Stands a shield for prurient minds;  
Never, permitting these things unchallenged  
Shall my voice of leaves and varicolored bark come  
through!"

At which, knowing her solitude,  
I shouted over the country below me:  
"Waken! my people, to the boughs green  
With ripening fruit within you!  
Waken to the myriad cinquefoil  
In the waving grass of your minds!  
Waken to the silent phoebe nest  
Under the eaves of your spirit!"

But she, stooping nearer the shifting hills  
Spoke again. "Look there! See them!  
There in the oat field with the horses,  
See them there! bowed by their passions

Crushed down, that had been raised as a roof beam!  
The weight of the sky is upon them  
Under, which all roof beams crumble.  
There is none but the single roof beam:  
There is no love bears against the great firefly!"  
At this I looked up at the sun  
Then shouted again with all the might I had.  
But my voice was a seed in the wind.  
Then she, the old one, laughing  
Seized me and whirling about bore back  
To the city, upward, still laughing  
Until the great towers stood above the marshland  
Wheeling beneath: the little creeks, the mallows  
That I picked as a boy, the Hackensack  
So quiet that seemed so broad formerly:  
The crawling trains, the cedar swamp on the one side—  
All so old, so familiar—so new now  
To my marvelling eyes as we passed  
Invisible.

### *SOOTHSAY*

Eight days went by, eight days  
Comforted by no nights, until finally:  
"Would you behold yourself old, beloved?"  
I was pierced, yet I consented gladly  
For I knew it could not be otherwise.  
And she—"Behold yourself old!  
Sustained in strength, wielding might in gript surges!  
Not bodying the sun in weak leaps  
But holding way over rockish men  
With fern-free fingers on their little crags,  
Their hollows, the new Atlas, to bear them  
For pride and for mockery! Behold  
Yourself old! winding with slow might—  
A vine among oaks—to the thin tops:

Leaving the leafless leaved,  
Bearing purple clusters! Behold  
Yourself old! birds are behind you.  
You are the wind coming that stills birds,  
Shakes the leaves in booming polyphony—  
Slow winning high way amid the knocking  
Of boughs, evenly crescendo,  
The din and bellow of the male wind!  
Leap then from forest into foam!  
Lash about from low into high flames  
Tipping sound, the female chorus—  
Linking all lions, all twitterings  
To make them nothing! Behold yourself old!”  
As I made to answer she continued,  
A little wistfully yet in a voice clear cut:  
“Good is my over lip and evil  
My under lip to you henceforth:  
For I have taken your soul between my two hands  
And this shall be as it is spoken.”

### *ST. JAMES' GROVE*

And so it came to that last day  
When, she leading by the hand, we went out  
Early in the morning, I heavy of heart  
For I knew the novitiate was ended  
The ecstacy was over, the life begun.  
In my woolen shirt and the pale-blue necktie  
My grandmother gave me, there I went  
With the old queen right past the houses  
Of my friends down the hill to the river  
As on any usual day, any errand.  
Alone, walking under trees,  
I went with her, she with me in her wild hair,  
By Santiago Grove and presently  
She bent forward and knelt by the river,

The Passaic, that filthy river.  
And there dabbling her mad hands,  
She called me close beside her.  
Raising the water then in the cupped palm  
She bathed our brows wailing and laughing:  
"River, we are old, you and I,  
We are old and by bad luck, beggars.  
Lo, the filth in our hair, our bodies stink!  
Old friend, here I have brought you  
The young soul you long asked of me.  
Stand forth, river, and give me  
The old friend of my revels!  
Give me the well-worn spirit,  
For here I have made a room for it,  
And I will return to you forthwith  
The youth you have long asked of me:  
Stand forth, river, and give me  
The old friend of my revels!"

And the filthy Passaic consented!

Then she, leaping up with a fierce cry:  
"Enter, youth, into this bulk!  
Enter, river, into this young man!"  
Then the river began to enter my heart,  
Eddying back cool and limpid  
Into the crystal beginning of its days.  
But with the rebound it leaped forward:  
Muddy, then black and shrunken  
Till I felt the utter depth of its rottenness  
The vile breadth of its degradation  
And dropped down knowing this was me now.  
But she lifted me and the water took a new tide  
Again into the older experiences,  
And so, backward and forward,  
It tortured itself within me

Until time had been washed finally under,  
And the river had found its level  
And its last motion had ceased  
And I knew all—it became me.  
And I knew this for double certain  
For there, whitely, I saw myself  
Being borne off under the water!  
I could have shouted out in my agony  
At the sight of myself departing  
Forever—but I bit back my despair  
For she had averted her eyes  
By which I knew well what she was thinking—  
And so the last of me was taken.

Then she, "Be mostly silent!"  
And turning to the river, spoke again:  
"For him and for me, river, the wandering,  
But by you I leave for happiness  
Deep foliage, the thickest beeches—  
Though elsewhere they are all dying—  
Tallest oaks and yellow birches  
That dip their leaves in you, mourning,  
As now I dip my hair, immemorial  
Of me, immemorial of him  
Immemorial of these our promises!  
Here shall be a bird's paradise,  
They sing to you remembering my voice:  
Here the most secluded spaces  
For miles around, hallowed by a stench  
To be our joint solitude and temple;  
In memory of this clear marriage  
And the child I have brought you in the late years.  
Live, river, live in luxuriance  
Remembering this our son,  
In remembrance of me and my sorrow  
And of the new wandering!"

## ***The Tempers***





## ***Peace on Earth***

The archer is wake!  
The Swan is flying!  
Gold against blue  
An Arrow is lying.  
There is hunting in heaven—  
Sleep safe till tomorrow.

The Bears are abroad!  
The Eagle is screaming!  
Gold against blue  
Their eyes are gleaming!  
Sleep!  
Sleep safe till tomorrow.

The Sisters lie  
With their arms intertwining;  
Gold against blue  
Their hair is shining!  
The Serpent writhes!  
Orion is listening!  
Gold against blue  
His sword is glistening!  
Sleep!  
There is hunting in heaven—  
Sleep safe till tomorrow.

## Postlude

Now that I have cooled to you  
Let there be gold of tarnished masonry,  
Temples soothed by the sun to ruin  
That sleep utterly.  
Give me hand for the dances,  
Ripples at Philae, in and out,  
And lips, my Lesbian,  
Wall flowers that once were flame.

Your hair is my Carthage  
And my arms the bow,  
And our words arrows  
To shoot the stars  
Who from that misty sea  
Swarm to destroy us.  
But you there beside me—  
Oh how shall I defy you,  
Who wound me in the night  
With breasts shining  
Like Venus and like Mars<sup>3</sup>  
The night that is shouting Jason  
When the loud eaves rattle  
As with waves above me  
Blue at the prow of my desire.

O, prayers in the dark!  
O, incense to Poseidon!  
Calm in Atlantis.

## ***First Praise***

Lady of dusk-wood fastnesses,

Thou art my Lady.

I have known the crisp, splintering leaf-tread with thee on  
before,

White, slender through green saplings;

I have lain by thee on the brown forest floor

Beside thee, my Lady.

Lady of rivers strewn with stones,

Only thou art my Lady.

Where thousand the freshets are crowded like peasants to  
a fair;

Clear-skinned, wild from seclusion

They jostle white-armed down the tent-bordered  
thoroughfare

Praising my Lady.

## **Homage**

Elvira, by love's grace  
There goeth before you  
A clear radiance  
Which maketh all vain souls  
Candles when noon is.

The loud clangor of pretenders  
Melteth before you  
Like the roll of carts passing,  
But you come silently  
And homage is given.

Now the little by-path  
Which leadeth to love  
Is again joyful with its many;  
And the great highway  
From love  
Is without passers.

## ***The Fool's Song***

I tried to put a bird in a cage.

O fool that I am!

For the bird was Truth.

Sing merrily, Truth: I tried to put

Truth in a cage!

And when I had the bird in the cage,

O fool that I am!

Why, it broke my pretty cage.

Sing merrily, Truth: I tried to put

Truth in a cage!

And when the bird was flown from the cage,

O fool that I am!

Why, I had nor bird nor cage.

Sing merrily, Truth: I tried to put

Truth in a cage!

Heigh-ho! Truth in a cage.

## **From "The Birth of Venus", Song**

Come with us and play!  
See, we have breasts as women!  
From your tents by the sea  
Come play with us: it is forbidden!

Come with us and play!  
Lo, bare, straight legs in the water!  
By our boats we stay,  
Then swimming away  
Come to us: it is forbidden!

Come with us and play!  
See, we are tall as women!  
Our eyes are keen:  
Our hair is bright:  
Our voices speak outright:  
We revel in the sea's green!  
Come play:  
It is forbidden!

## **Immortal**

Yes, there is one thing braver than all flowers;  
Richer than clear gems; wider than the sky,  
Immortal and unchangeable; whose powers  
Transcend reason, love and sanity!

And thou, beloved, art that godly thing!  
Marvelous and terrible; in glance  
An injured Juno roused against Heaven's King!  
And thy name, lovely One, is Ignorance.

## **Mezzo Forte**

Take that, damn you; and that!  
And here's a rose  
To make it right again!  
God knows  
I'm sorry, Grace; but then,  
It's not my fault if you will be a cat.

## **Crude Lament**

Mother of flames,  
The men that went a hunting  
Are asleep in the snow drifts.  
You have kept the fire burning!  
Crooked fingers that pull  
Fuel from among the wet leaves,  
Mother of flames  
You have kept the fire burning!  
The young wives have fallen asleep  
With wet hair, weeping,  
Mother of flames!  
The young men raised the heavy spears  
And are gone prowling in the darkness.  
O mother of flames,  
You who have kept the fire burning!  
Lo, I am helpless!  
Would God they had taken me with them!

## **An After Song**

So art thou broken in upon me, Apollo,  
Through a splendor of purple garments—  
Held by the yellow-haired Clymene  
To clothe the white of thy shoulders—  
Bare from the day's leaping of horses.  
This is strange to me, here in the modern twilight.



## ***The Ordeal***

O crimson salamander,  
Because of love's whim  
sacred!

Swim  
the winding flame  
Predestined to disman him  
And bring our fellow home to us again.  
Swim in with watery fang,  
Gnaw out and drown  
The fire roots that circle him  
Until the Hell-flower dies down  
And he comes home again.

Aye, bring him home,  
O crimson salamander,  
That I may see he is unchanged with burning—  
Then have your will with him,  
O crimson salamander.

## ***Appeal***

You who are so mighty,  
crimson salamander,  
hear me once more.  
I lay among the half-burned sticks  
at the edge of the fire.  
The fiend was creeping in.  
I felt the cold tips of fingers—

O crimson salamander!

Give me one little flame,  
one!  
that I may bind it  
protectingly about the wrist  
of him that flung me here,  
here upon the very center!

This is my song.

## ***Fire Spirit***

I am old.  
You warm yourselves at these fires?  
In the center of these flames  
I sit, my teeth chatter!  
Where shall I turn for comfort?

## ***The Death of Franco of Cologne: His Prophecy of Beethoven***

It is useless, good woman, useless: the spark fails me.  
God! yet when the might of it all assails me  
It seems impossible that I cannot do it.  
Yet I cannot. They were right, and they all knew it  
Years ago, but I—never! I have persisted  
Blindly (they say) and now I am old. I have resisted  
Everything, but now, now the strife's ended.  
The fire's out; the old cloak has been mended  
For the last time, the soul peers through its tatters.  
Put a light by and leave me; nothing more matters  
Now; I am done; I am at last well broken!  
Yet, by God, I'll still leave them a token  
That they'll swear it was no dead man writ it;  
A morsel that they'll mark well the day they bit it,  
That there'll be sand between their gross teeth to crunch yet  
When goodman Gabriel blows his concluding trumpet.  
Leave me!

And now, little black eyes, come you out here!  
Ah, you've given me a lively, lasting bout, year  
After year to win you round me darlings!  
Precious children, little gambollers! "farlings"  
They might have called you once, "nearlings"  
I call you now, I first of all the yearlings,  
Upon this plain, for I it was that tore you  
Out of chaos! It was I bore you!  
Ah, you little children that go playing  
Over the five-barred gate, and will still be straying  
Spite of all that I have ever told you  
Of counterpoint and cadence which does not hold you—  
No more than chains will for this or that strange reason,  
But you're always at some new loving treason

To be away from me, laughing, mocking,  
Witlessly, perhaps, but for all that forever knocking  
At this stanchion door of your poor father's heart till—  
oh, well

At least you've shown that you can grow well  
However much you evade me faster, faster.  
But, black eyes some day you'll get a master,  
For he will come! He shall, he must come!  
And when he finishes and the burning dust from  
His wheels settles—what shall men see then?  
You, you, you, my own lovely children!  
Aye, all of you, thus with hands together  
Playing on the hill or there in a tether,  
Or running free, but all mine! Aye, my very namesakes  
Shall be his proper fame's stakes.  
And he shall lead you! ' /  
And he shall mead you!  
And he shall build you gold palaces!  
And he shall wine you from clear chalices!  
For I have seen it! I have seen it  
Written where the world-clouds screen it  
From other eyes  
Over the bronze gates of paradise!

## **Portent**

Red cradle of the night,  
In you  
The dusky child  
Sleeps fast till his might  
Shall be piled  
Sinew on sinew.

Red cradle of the night,  
The dusky child  
Sleeping sits upright.  
Lo! how  
The winds blow now!  
He pillows back;  
The winds are again mild.

When he stretches his arms out,  
Red cradle of the night,  
The alarms shout  
From bare tree to tree,  
Wild  
In afright!  
Mighty shall he be,  
Red cradle of the night,  
The dusky child! '

## ***Ad Infinitum***

Still I bring flowers  
Although you fling them at my feet  
Until none stays  
That is not struck across with wounds  
Flowers and flowers  
That you may break them utterly  
As you have always done.

Sure happily  
I still bring flowers, flowers,  
Knowing how all  
Are crumpled in your praise  
And may not live  
To speak a lesser thing.

## **Contemporania**

The corner of a great rain  
Steamy with the country  
Has fallen upon my garden.

I go back and forth now  
And the little leaves follow me  
Talking of the great rain,  
Of branches broken,  
And the farmer's curses!

But I go back and forth  
In this corner of a garden  
And the green shoots follow me  
Praising the great rain.

We are not curst together,  
The leaves and I,  
Framing devices, flower devices  
And other ways of peopling  
The barren country.  
Truly it was a very great rain  
That makes the little leaves follow me.

## ***Hic Jacet***

The coroner's merry little children  
Have such twinkling brown eyes.  
Their father is not of gay men  
And their mother jocular in no wise,  
Yet the coroner's merry little children  
Laugh so easily.

They laugh because they prosper.  
Fruit for them is upon all branches.  
Lo! how they jibe at loss, for  
Kind heaven fills their little paunches!  
It's the coroner's merry, merry children  
Who laugh so easily.



## Con Brio

Miserly, is the best description of that poor fool  
Who holds Lancelot to have been a morose fellow,  
Dolefully brooding over the events which had naturally  
to follow

The high time of his deed with Guinevere.  
He has a sick historical sight, if I judge rightly,  
To believe any such thing as that ever occurred.  
But, by the god of blood, what else is it that has deterred  
Us all from an out and out defiance of fear  
But this same perdamnable miserliness,  
Which cries about our necks how we shall have less  
and less

Than we have now if we spend too wantonly?  
Bah, this sort of slither is below contempt!  
In the same vein we should have apple trees exempt  
From bearing anything but pink blossoms all the year,  
Fixed permanent lest their bellies wax unseemly, and the dear  
Innocent days of them be wasted quite.  
How can we have less? Have we not the deed?  
Lancelot thought little, spent his gold and rode to fight  
Mounted, if God was willing, on a good steed.

## ***To Wish Myself Courage***

On the day when youth is no more upon me  
I will write of the leaves and the moon in a tree top!  
I will sing then the song, long in the making—  
When the stress of youth is put away from me.

How can I ever be written out as men say?  
Surely it is merely an interference with the long song—  
This that I am now doing.

But when the spring of it is worn like the old moon  
And the eaten leaves are lace upon the cold earth—  
Then I will rise up in my great desire—  
Long at the birth—and sing me the youth-song!

## ***To Mark Anthony in Heaven***

This quiet morning light  
reflected, how many times  
from grass and trees and clouds  
enters my north room  
touching the walls with  
grass and clouds and trees.  
Anthony,  
trees and grass and clouds.  
Why did you follow  
that beloved body  
with your ships at Actium?  
I hope it was because  
you knew her inch by inch  
from slanting feet upward  
to the roots of her hair  
and down again and that  
you saw her  
above the battle's fury—  
clouds and trees and grass—

For then you are  
listening in heaven.

## ***Transitional***

First he said:  
It is the woman in us  
That makes us write—  
Let us acknowledge it—  
Men would be silent.  
We are not men  
Therefore we can speak  
And be conscious  
(of the two sides)  
Unbent by the sensual  
As befits accuracy.

I then said:  
Dare you make this  
Your propaganda?

And he answered:  
Am I not I—here?

## ***Sicilian Emigrant's Song***

O—eh—lee! La—la!

Donna! Donna!

Blue is the sky of Palermo;

Blue is the little bay;

And dost thou remember the orange and fig,

The lively sun and the sea-breeze at evening?

Hey—la!

Donna! Donna! Maria!

O—eh—li! La—la!

Donna! Donna!

Grey is the sky of this land.

Grey and green is the water.

I see no trees, dost thou? The wind

Is cold for the big woman there with the candle

Hey—la!

Donna! Donna! Maria!

O—eh—li! O—la!

Donna! Donna!

I sang thee by the blue waters;

I sing thee here in the grey dawning.

Kiss, for I put down my guitar,

I'll sing thee more songs after the landing.

O Jesu, I love thee!

Donna! Donna! Maria!

## ***Le Medecin Malgre Lui***

Oh I suppose I should  
wash the walls of my office  
polish the rust from  
my instruments and keep them  
definitely in order  
build shelves in the laboratory  
empty out the old stains  
clean the bottles  
and refill them, buy  
another lens, put  
my journals on edge instead of  
letting them lie flat  
in heaps—then begin  
ten years back and  
gradually  
read them to date  
cataloguing important  
articles for ready reference.  
I suppose I should  
read the new books.  
If to this I added  
a bill at the tailor's  
and at the cleaner's  
grew a decent beard  
and cultivated a look  
of importance—  
Who can tell? I might be  
a credit to my Lady Happiness  
and never think anything  
but a white thought!

## ***Man in a Room***

Here, no woman, nor man besides,  
Nor child, nor dog, nor bird, nor wasp,  
Nor ditch-pool, nor green thing. Color of flower,  
Blood-bright berry none, nor flame-rust  
On leaf, nor pink gall-sting on stem, nor  
Staring stone, *Ay de mi!*  
No hawthorn's white thorn-tree here, nor lawn  
Of buttercups, nor any counterpart:

Bed, book-backs, walls, floor,  
Flat pictures, desk, clothes-box, litter  
Of paper scrawls So sit I here,  
So stand, so walk about. Beside  
The flower-white tree not so lonely I:  
Torn petals, dew-wet, yellowed my bare ankles.

## **A Coronal**

New books of poetry will be written  
New books and unheard of manuscripts  
will come wrapped in brown paper  
and many and many a time  
the postman will blow  
and sidle down the leaf-plastered steps  
thumbing over other men's business

But we ran ahead of it all.  
One coming after  
could have seen her footprints  
in the wet and followed us  
among the stark chestnuts.

Anemones sprang where she pressed  
and cresses  
stood green in the slender source—  
And new books of poetry  
will be written, leather-colored oakleaves  
many and many a time.



## ***The Revelation***

I awoke happy, the house  
Was strange, voices  
Were across a gap  
Through which a girl  
Came and paused,  
Reaching out to me—

Then I remembered  
What I had dreamed—  
A girl  
One whom I knew well  
Leaned on the door of my car  
And stroked my hand—

I shall pass her on the street  
We shall say trivial things  
To each other  
But I shall never cease  
To search her eyes  
For that quiet look—

## **Portrait of a Lady**

Your thighs are appletrees  
whose blossoms touch the sky.  
Which sky? The sky  
where Watteau hung a lady's  
slipper. Your knees  
are a southern breeze—or  
a gust of snow. Agh! what  
sort of man was Fragonard?  
—as if that answered  
anything. Ah, yes—below  
the knees, since the tune  
drops that way, it is  
one of those white summer days,  
the tall grass of your ankles  
flickers upon the shore—  
Which shore?—  
the sand clings to my lips—  
Which shore?  
Agh, petals maybe. How  
should I know?  
Which shore? Which shore?  
I said petals from an appletree.

***March***

•

***History***



## March

### I

Winter is long in this climate  
and spring—a matter of a few days  
only,—a flower or two picked  
from mud or from among wet leaves  
or at best against treacherous  
bitterness of wind, and sky shining  
teasingly, then closing in black  
and sudden, with fierce jaws.

### II

March,

    you remind me of  
the pyramids, our pyramids—  
stript of the polished stone  
that used to guard them!

March,

you are like Fra Angelico  
at Fiesole, painting on plaster!

March,

    you are like a band of  
young poets that have not learned  
the blessedness of warmth  
(or have forgotten it).

At any rate—

I am moved to write poetry  
for the warmth there is in it  
and for the loneliness—  
a poem that shall have you  
    in it March.

### III

See!

Ashur-ban-i-pal,  
the archer king, on horse-back,  
in blue and yellow enamel!  
with drawn bow—facing lions  
standing on their hind legs,  
fangs bared! his shafts  
bristling in their necks!

Sacred bulls—dragons  
in embossed brickwork  
marching—in four tiers—  
along the sacred way to  
Nebuchadnessar's throne hall!  
They shine in the sun,  
they that have been marching—  
marching under the dust of  
ten thousand dirt years.

Now—

they are coming into bloom again!

See them!

marching still, bared by  
the storms from my calendar  
—winds that blow back the sand!  
winds that enfilade dirt!  
winds that by strange craft  
have whipt up a black army  
that by pick and shovel  
bare a procession to  
the god, Marduk!

Natives cursing and digging  
for pay unearth dragons with  
upright tails and sacred bulls

alternately—  
    in four tiers—  
lining the way to an old altar!  
Natives digging at old walls—  
digging me warmth—digging me sweet loneliness  
high enamelled walls.

#### IV

My second spring—  
passed in a monastery  
with plaster walls—in Fiesole  
on the hill above Florence.  
My second spring—painted  
a virgin—in a blue aureole  
sitting on a three-legged stool,  
arms crossed—  
she is intently serious,  
                                    and still

watching an angel  
with colored wings  
half kneeling before her—  
and smiling—the angel's eyes  
holding the eyes of Mary  
as a snake's hold a bird's.  
On the ground there are flowers,  
trees are in leaf.

#### V

But! now for the battle!  
Now for murder—now for the real thing!  
My third springtime is approaching!  
Winds!

lean, serious as a virgin,  
seeking, seeking the flowers of March.

Seeking

flowers nowhere to be found,  
they twine among the bare branches  
in insatiable eagerness—  
they whirl up the snow  
seeking under it—  
they—the winds—snakelike  
roar among yellow reeds  
seeking flowers—flowers.

I spring among them  
seeking one flower  
in which to warm myself!

I deride with all the ridicule  
of misery—  
my own starved misery.

Counter-cutting winds strike against me  
refreshing their fury!

Come, good, cold fellows!

Have we no flowers?

Defy then with even more  
desperation than ever—being  
lean and frozen!

But though you are lean and frozen—  
think of the blue bulls of Babylon.

Fling yourselves upon  
their empty roses—  
cut savagely!

But—

think of the painted monastery  
at Fiesole.



## ***History***



## ***History***

### I

A wind might blow a lotus petal  
over the pyramids—but not this wind.

Summer is a dried leaf.

Leaves stir this way then that  
on the baked asphalt, the wheels  
of motor cars rush over them,—  
gas smells mingle with leaf smells.

Oh, Sunday, day of worship! ! !

The steps to the Museum are high.  
Worshippers pass in and out.  
Nobody comes here today.  
I come here to mingle faience dug  
from the tomb, turquoise-colored  
necklaces and wind belched from the  
stomach; deliberately veined basins  
of agate, cracked and discolored and  
the stink of stale urine!

Enter! Elbow in at the door.  
Men? Women?  
Simpering, clay fetish-faces counting  
through the turnstile.

Ah!

This sarcophagus contained the body  
of Uresh-Nai, priest to the goddess Mut,  
Mother of All—

Run your finger against this edge!  
—here went the chisel!—and think  
of an arrogance endured six thousand  
years  
Without a flaw!

But love is an oil to embalm the body.  
Love is a packet of spices, a strong-  
smelling liquid to be squirted into  
the thigh. No?  
Love rubbed on a bald head will make  
hair—and after? Love is  
a lice comber!

Gnats on dung!

“The chisel is in your hand, the block  
is before you, cut as I shall dictate:  
This is the coffin of Uresh-Nai,  
priest to the Sky Goddess,—built  
to endure forever!

Carve the inside  
with the image of my death in  
little lines of figures three fingers high.  
Put a lid on it cut with Mut bending over  
the earth, for my headpiece, and in  
the year  
to be chosen I shall rouse, the lid  
shall be lifted and I will walk about  
the temple where they have rested me

and eat the air of the place:  
Ah—these walls are high! This is in  
keeping.”

3

The priest has passed into his tomb.  
The stone has taken up his spirit!  
Granite over the flesh: who will deny  
its advantages?

Your death?—water  
spilled upon the ground—  
though water will mount again into  
rose-leaves—  
but you?—Would hold life still,  
even as a memory, when it is over,  
Benevolence is rare.

Climb about this sarcophagus, read  
what is writ for you in these figures  
hard as the granite that has held them  
with so soft a hand the while  
your own flesh has been fifty times  
through the guts of oxen,—read!  
“I who am the one flesh say to you,  
The rose-tree will have its donor  
even though he give stingily.  
The gift of some endures  
ten years, the gift of some twenty  
and the gift of some for the time a  
great house rots and is torn down.  
Some give for a thousand years to  
men of  
one face, some for a thousand

to all men and some few to all men  
while granite holds an edge against  
the weather.

Judge then of love!"

4

"My flesh is turned to stone. I  
have endured my summer. The flurry  
of falling petals is ended. Lay  
the finger upon this granite. I was  
well desired and fully caressed  
by many lovers but my flesh  
withered swiftly and my heart was  
never satisfied. Lay your hands  
upon the granite as a lover lays his  
hand upon the thigh and upon the  
round breasts of her who is beside  
him, for now I will not wither,  
now I have thrown off secrecy, now  
I have walked naked into the street,  
now I have scattered my heavy beauty  
in the open market.

Here I am with head high and a  
burning heart eagerly awaiting  
your caresses, whoever it may be,  
for granite is not harder than my  
love is open, runs loose among you!

I arrogant against death! I  
who have endured! I worn against  
the years!"

But it is five o'clock. Come!  
 Life is good—enjoy it!  
 A walk in the park while the day lasts.  
 I will go with you. Look! this  
 northern scenery is not the Nile, but—  
 these benches—the yellow and purple  
                   dusk—  
 the moon there—these tired people—  
 the lights on the water!

Are not these Jews and—Ethiopians?  
 The world is young, surely! Young  
 and colored like—a girl that has come  
                   upon  
 a lover! Will that do?





## ***Della Primavera Transportata Al Morale***



## ***Della Primavera Trasportata Al Morale***

### APRIL

the beginning—or  
what you will:  
                    the dress  
in which the veritable winter  
walks in Spring—

Loose it!  
Let it fall (where it will)  
—again

A live thing  
the buds are upon it  
the green shoot come between  
the red flowerets  
                    curled back

Under whose green veil  
strain trunk and limbs of  
the supporting trees—

Yellow! the arched stick  
pinning the fragile foil  
—in abundance  
                    or

the bush before the rose  
pointed with green

bent into form  
upon the iron frame

wild onion  
swifter than the grass

the grass thick  
at the post's base

iris blades unsheathed—

### BUY THIS PROPERTY

—the complexion of the impossible  
(you'll say)

never realized—  
At a desk in a hotel in front of a

machine a year  
later—for a day or two—

(Quite so—)  
Whereas the reality trembles

frankly  
in that though it was like this

in part  
it was deformed

even when at its utmost to  
touch—as it did

and fill and give and take  
—a kind

of rough drawing of flowers  
and April

## STOP : GO

—she  
opened the door! nearly  
six feet tall, and I . . .  
wanted to found a new country—

For the rest, virgin negress  
at the glass  
in blue-glass Venetian beads—

a green truck  
dragging a concrete mixer  
passes  
in the street—  
the clatter and true sound  
of verse—

—the wind is howling  
the river, shining mud—

Moral  
it looses me

Moral  
it supports me

Moral  
it has never ceased  
to flow

Moral  
the faded evergreen

Moral  
I can laugh

Moral

the redhead sat  
in bed with her legs  
crossed and talked  
rough stuff

Moral

the door is open

Moral

the tree moving diversely  
in all parts—

—the moral is love, bred of  
the mind and eyes and hands—

But in the cross-current

between what the hands reach  
and the mind desires

and the eyes see  
and see starvation, it is

useless to have it thought  
that we are full—

But April is a thing  
comes just the same—

and in it we see now  
what then we did not know—

STOP : STOP

I believe

in the sound patriotic and

progressive Mulish policies  
and if elected—

I believe  
in a continuance of the protective tariff because—

I believe  
that the country can't do too much—

I believe  
in honest law enforcement—  
and I also believe—

I believe  
in giving the farmer and land owner adequate protection

I believe

I believe

I believe  
in equality for the negro—

### THIS IS MY PLATFORM

I believe in your love

the first dandelion  
flower at the edge of—

taraaaaaaa! taraaaaaaa!

—the fishman's bugle announces  
the warm wind—

reminiscent of the sea  
the plumbtree flaunts  
its blossom-encrusted  
branches—

I believe

Moving to three doors  
above—May 1st.

I believe

ICE—and warehouse site

No parking between tree and corner

You would “kill me with kindness”  
I love you too, but I love you  
too—

Thus, in that light and in that  
light only can I say—

Winter : Spring  
abandoned to you. The world lost—  
in you

Is not that devastating enough  
for one century?

I believe

Spumoni	\$1.00
French Vanilla	.70
Chocolate	.70
Strawberry	.70
Maple Walnut	.70
Coffee	.70
Tutti Frutti	.70



Pistachio	.70
Cherry Special	.70
Orange Ice	.70
Biscuit Tortoni	
25c per portion	

trees—seeming dead  
the long years—

*tactus eruditus*

Maple, I see you have  
a squirrel in your crotch—

And you have a woodpecker  
in your hole, Sycamore

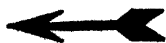
—a fat blonde, in purple (no trucking  
on this street)

POISON!



I believe

WOMAN'S WARD



PRIVATE



The soul, my God, shall rise up  
—a tree

But who are You?  
in this mortal wind  
that I at least can understand  
having sinned willingly

The forms  
of the emotions are crystalline,  
geometric-faceted. So we recognize  
only in the white heat of  
understanding, when a flame  
runs through the gap made  
by learning, the shapes of things—  
the ovoid sun, the pointed trees

lashing branches

The wind is fierce, lashing

the long-limbed trees whose  
branches  
wildly toss—

## **Full Moon**

Blessed moon  
noon  
of night

that through the dark  
bids Love  
stay—

curious shapes  
awake  
to plague me

Is day near  
shining girl?  
Yes, day!

the warm  
the radiant  
all fulfilling

day.

## **The Trees**

The trees—being trees  
thrash and scream  
guffaw and curse—  
wholly abandoned  
damning the race of men—

Christ, the bastards  
haven't even sense enough  
to stay out of the rain—

Wha ha ha ha

Wheeeeeee  
Clacka tacka tacka  
tacka tacka  
wha ha ha ha ha  
ha ha ha

knocking knees, buds  
bursting from each pore  
even the trunk's self  
putting out leafheads—

Loose desire!  
we naked cry to you—  
“Do what you please.”

You cannot!

—ghosts  
sapped of strength

wailing at the gate  
heartbreak at the bridgehead—

desire  
dead in the heart

haw haw haw haw  
—and memory broken

whreeeee

There were never satyrs  
never maenads  
never eagle-headed gods—  
These were men  
from whose hands sprung  
love  
bursting the wood—

Trees their companions  
—a cold wind winterlong  
in the hollows of our flesh  
icy with pleasure—

no part of us untouched

## ***The Wind Increases***

The harried  
earth is swept           The trees  
the tulip's bright  
                  tips  
                  sidle and  
toss—

                  Loose your love  
to flow

Blow!

Good Christ what is  
a poet—if any  
                  exists?

a man  
whose words will  
                  bite  
                  their way  
home—being actual

having the form  
                  of motion

At each twigtip

new

upon the tortured  
body of thought

gripping  
the ground

a way  
to the last leaftip

### ***The Bird's Companion***

As love  
that is  
each day upon the twig  
which may die

So springs your love  
fresh up  
lusty for the sun  
the bird's companion—

## **The House**

The house is yours  
to wander in as you please—  
Your breakfasts will be kept  
ready for you until

you choose to arise!  
This is the front room  
where we stood penniless  
by the hogshead of crockery.

This is the kitchen—  
We have a new  
hotwater heater and a new  
gas-stove to please you

And the front stairs  
have been freshly painted—  
white risers  
and the treads mahogany.

Come upstairs  
to the bedroom—  
Your bed awaits you—  
the chiffonier waits—

the whole house  
is waiting—for you  
to walk in it at your pleasure—  
It is yours.



## ***The Sea-Elephant***

Trundled from  
the strangeness of the sea—  
a kind of  
heaven—

Ladies and Gentlemen!  
the greatest  
sea-monster ever exhibited  
alive

the gigantic  
sea-elephant! O wallow  
of flesh were  
are

there fish enough for  
that  
appetite stupidity  
cannot lessen?

Sick  
of April's smallness  
the little  
leaves—

Flesh has lief of you  
enormous sea—  
Speak!  
Blouaugh! (feed

me) my  
flesh is riven—

fish after fish into his maw  
unswallowing

to let them glide down  
gulching back  
half spittle half  
brine

the  
troubled eyes—torn  
from the sea.  
(In

a practical voice) They  
ought  
to put it back where  
it came from.

Gape.  
Strange head—  
told by old sailors—  
rising

bearded  
to the surface—and  
the only  
sense out of them

is that woman's  
Yes  
it's wonderful but they  
ought to

put it  
back into the sea where

it came from.  
Blouaugh!

Swing—ride  
walk  
on wires—toss balls  
stoop and

contort yourselves—  
But I  
am love. I am  
from the sea—

Blouaugh!  
there is no crime save  
the too-heavy  
body

the sea  
held playfully—comes  
to the surface  
the water

boiling  
about the head the cows  
scattering  
fish dripping from

the bounty  
of . . . . and spring  
they say  
Spring is icummen in—

## Rain

As the rain falls  
so does  
    your love

bathe every  
    open  
object of the world—

In houses  
the priceless dry  
    rooms  
of illicit love  
where we live  
hear the wash of the  
    rain—

There  
    paintings  
and fine  
    metalware  
woven stuffs—  
all the whorishness  
of our  
    delight  
sees  
from its window  
  
the spring wash  
of your love  
    the falling  
rain—

The trees  
are become

beasts fresh-risen  
from the sea—  
water

trickles  
from the crevices of  
their hides—

So my life is spent  
to keep out love  
with which  
she rains upon

the world

of spring

drips

so spreads

the words

far apart to let in

her love

And running in between

the drops

the rain

is a kind physician

the rain  
of her thoughts over

the ocean  
every

where

walking with  
invisible swift feet  
over

the helpless  
waves—

Unworldly love  
that has no hope  
of the world

and that  
cannot change the world  
to its delight—

The rain  
falls upon the earth  
and grass and flowers

come  
perfectly  
into form from its  
liquid

clearness

But love is  
unworldly

and nothing  
comes of it but love

following  
and falling endlessly  
from  
her thoughts

## Death

He's dead  
the dog won't have to  
sleep on his potatoes  
any more to keep them  
from freezing

he's dead  
the old bastard—  
He's a bastard because

there's nothing  
legitimate in him any  
more

he's dead  
He's sick-dead

he's  
a godforsaken curio  
without  
any breath in it

He's nothing at all  
he's dead  
shrunk up to skin

Put his head on  
one chair and his  
feet on another and  
he'll lie there  
like an acrobat—

Love's beaten. He  
beat it. That's why  
he's insufferable—



because  
he's here needing a  
shave and making love  
an inside howl  
of anguish and defeat—

He's come out of the man  
and he's let  
the man go—  
the liar

Dead  
his eyes  
rolled up out of  
the light—a mockery

which  
love cannot touch—

just bury it  
and hide its face  
for shame.

## ***The Botticellian Trees***

The alphabet of  
the trees

is fading in the  
song of the leaves

the crossing  
bars of the thin

letters that spelled  
winter

and the cold  
have been illumined

with  
pointed green

by the rain and sun—  
The strict simple

principles of  
straight branches

are being modified  
by pinched-out

ifs of color, devout  
conditions

the smiles of love—  
. . . . .

until the stript  
sentences

move as a woman's  
limbs under cloth

and praise from secrecy  
quick with desire

love's ascendancy  
in summer—

In summer the song  
sings itself

above the muffled words—



## ***An Early Martyr***



## ***An Early Martyr***

Rather than permit him  
to testify in court  
Giving reasons  
why he stole from  
Exclusive stores  
then sent post-cards  
To the police  
to come and arrest him  
—if they could—  
They railroaded him  
to an asylum for  
The criminally insane  
without trial

The prophylactic to  
madness  
Having been denied him  
he went close to  
The edge out of  
frustration and  
Doggedness—

Inflexible, finally they  
had to release him—  
The institution was  
“overcrowded”  
They let him go  
in the custody of  
A relative on condition  
that he remain  
Out of the state—

They “cured” him all  
right

But the set-up  
he fought against  
Remains—  
and his youthful deed  
Signalizing  
the romantic period  
Of a revolt  
he served well  
Is still good—

Let him be  
a factory whistle  
That keeps blaring—  
Sense, sense, sense!  
so long as there's  
A mind to remember  
and a voice to  
carry it on—

Never give up  
keep at it!  
Unavoided, terrifying  
to such bought  
Courts as he thought  
to trust to but they  
Double-crossed him.



## ***Flowers by the Sea***

When over the flowery, sharp pasture's  
edge, unseen, the salt ocean

lifts its form—chicory and daisies  
tied, released, seem hardly flowers alone

but color and the movement—or the shape  
perhaps—of restlessness, whereas

the sea is circled and sways  
peacefully upon its plantlike stem

## Wild Orchard

It is a broken country,  
the rugged land is  
green from end to end;  
the autumn has not come.

Embanked above the orchard  
the hillside is a wall  
of motionless green trees,  
the grass is green and red.

Five days the bare sky  
has stood there day and night.  
No bird, no sound.  
Between the trees

stillness  
and the early morning light.  
The apple trees  
are laden down with fruit.

Among blue leaves  
the apples green and red  
upon one tree stand out  
most enshrined.

Still, ripe, heavy,  
spherical and close,  
they mark the hillside.  
It is a formal grandeur,

a stateliness,  
a signal of finality  
and perfect ease.  
Among the savage

aristocracy of rocks  
one, risen as a tree,  
has turned  
from his repose.

## **Winter**

Now the snow  
lies on the ground  
and more snow  
is descending upon it—  
Patches of red dirt  
hold together  
the old  
snow patches

This is winter—  
rosettes of  
leather-green leaves  
by the old fence  
and bare trees  
marking the sky—

This is winter  
winter, winter  
leather-green leaves  
spearshaped  
in the falling snow

## ***The Flowers Alone***

I should have to be  
Chaucer to describe  
them—

Loss keeps  
me from such a  
catalogue—  
But!

—low, the  
violet, scentless as  
it is here! higher,  
the peartree in full  
bloom through which  
a light falls as  
rain—

And that is gone—

Only, there remains—

Now!

the cherry trees  
white in all back  
yards—

And bare as  
they are, the coral  
peach trees melting  
the harsh air—  
excellence  
priceless beyond  
all later

fruit!

And now, driven, I  
go, forced to  
another day—

Whose yellow quilt  
flapping in the  
stupendous light—

Forsythia, quince  
blossoms—

and all  
the living hybrids

### ***Sea-Trout and Butterfish***

The contours and the shine  
hold the eye—caught and lying

orange-finned and the two  
half its size, pout-mouthed

beside it on the white dish—  
Silver scales, the weight

quick tails  
whipping the streams aslant

The eye comes down eagerly  
unravelling of the sea

separates this from that  
and the fine fins' sharp spines

## ***A Portrait of the Times***

Two W. P. A. men  
stood in the new  
sluiceway

overlooking  
the river—  
One was pissing

while the other  
showed  
by his red

jagged face the  
immemorial tragedy  
of lack-love

while an old  
squint-eyed woman  
in a black

dress  
and clutching  
a bunch of

late chrysanthemums  
to her  
fatted bosoms

turned her back  
on them  
at the corner

## ***The Locust Tree in Flower***

Among  
of  
green

stiff  
old  
bright

broken  
branch  
come

white  
sweet  
May

again

## ***The Locust Tree in Flower***

Among  
the leaves  
bright

green  
of wrist-thick  
tree

and old  
stiff broken  
branch

ferncool  
swaying  
loosely strung—

come May  
again  
white blossom

clusters  
hide  
to spill

their sweets  
almost  
unnoticed

down  
and quickly  
fall



## **Item**

This, with a face  
like a mashed blood orange  
that suddenly

would get eyes  
and look up and scream  
War! War!

clutching her  
thick, ragged coat  
A piece of hat

broken shoes  
War! War!  
stumbling for dread

at the young men  
who with their gun-butts  
shove her

sprawling—  
a note  
at the foot of the page

## ***View of a Lake***

from a  
highway below a face  
of rock

too recently blasted  
to be overgrown  
with grass or fern:

Where a  
waste of cinders  
slopes down to

the railroad and  
the lake  
stand three children

beside the weed-grown  
chassis  
of a wrecked car

immobile in a line  
facing the water  
To the left a boy

in falling off  
blue overalls  
Next to him a girl

in a grimy frock  
And another boy  
They are intent

watching something  
below—?  
A section sign: 50

on an iron post  
planted  
by a narrow concrete

service hut  
(to which runs  
a sheaf of wires)

in the universal  
cinders beaten  
into crossing paths

to form the front yard  
of a frame house  
at the right

that looks  
to have been flayed  
Opposite

remains a sycamore  
in leaf  
Intently fixed

the three  
with straight backs  
ignore

the stalled traffic  
all eyes  
toward the water

## ***To a Mexican Pig-Bank***

and a small  
flock

of clay  
sheep—

a shepherd  
behind

them—The  
pig

is painted  
yellow

with green  
ears

There's a  
slot

at the  
top—

Hair-pin  
wires

hold up the  
sheep

turning  
away—

The shepherd  
wears

a red  
blanket

on his left  
shoulder

### ***To a Poor Old Woman***

munching a plum on  
the street a paper bag  
of them in her hand

They taste good to her  
They taste good  
to her. They taste  
good to her

You can see it by  
the way she gives herself  
to the one half  
sucked out in her hand

Comforted  
a solace of ripe plums  
seeming to fill the air  
They taste good to her

## ***Late for Summer Weather***

He has on  
an old light grey fedora  
She a black beret

He a dirty sweater  
She an old blue coat  
that fits her tight

Grey flapping pants  
Red skirt and  
broken down black pumps

Fat Lost Ambling  
nowhere through  
the upper town they kick

their way through  
heaps of  
fallen maple leaves

still green—and  
crisp as dollar bills  
Nothing to do. Hot cha!

## ***Proletarian Portrait***

A big young bareheaded woman  
in an apron

Her hair slicked back standing  
on the street

One stockinged foot toeing  
the sidewalk

Her shoe in her hand. Looking  
intently into it

She pulls out the paper insole  
to find the nail

That has been hurting her

## ***Tree and Sky***

Again  
the bare brush of  
the half-broken  
and already-written-of  
tree alone  
on its battered  
hummock—

Above  
among the shufflings  
of the distant  
cloud-rifts  
vaporously  
the unmoving  
blue



## ***The Raper from Passenack***

was very kind. When she regained  
her wits, he said, It's all right, kid,  
I took care of you.

What a mess she was in. Then he added,  
You'll never forget me now.  
And drove her home.

Only a man who is sick, she said  
would do a thing like that.  
It must be so.

No one who is not diseased could be  
so insanelly cruel. He wants to give it  
to someone else—

to justify himself. But if I get a  
venereal infection out of this  
I won't be treated.

I refuse. You'll find me dead in bed  
first. Why not? That's  
the way she spoke,

I wish I could shoot him. How would  
you like to know a murderer?  
I may do it.

I'll know by the end of this week.  
I wouldn't scream. I bit him  
several times

but he was too strong for me.  
I can't yet understand it. I don't  
faint so easily.

When I came to myself and realized  
what had happened all I could do  
was to curse

and call him every vile name I could  
think of. I was so glad  
to be taken home.

I suppose it's my mind—the fear of  
infection. I'd rather a million times  
have been got pregnant.

But it's the foulness of it can't  
be cured. And hatred, hatred of all men  
—and disgust.

## ***Invocation and Conclusion***

January!  
The beginning of all things!  
Sprung from the old burning nest  
upward in the flame!

I was married at thirteen  
My parents had nine kids  
and we were on the street  
That's why the old bugger—

He was twenty-six  
and I hadn't even had  
my changes yet. Now look at me!

## **The Yachts**

contend in a sea which the land partly encloses  
shielding them from the too-heavy blows  
of an ungoverned ocean which when it chooses

tortures the biggest hulls, the best man knows  
to pit against its beatings, and sinks them pitilessly.  
Mothlike in mists, scintillant in the minute

brilliance of cloudless days, with broad bellying sails  
they glide to the wind tossing green water  
from their sharp prows while over them the crew crawls

ant-like, solicitously grooming them, releasing,  
making fast as they turn, lean far over and having  
caught the wind again, side by side, head for the mark.

In a well guarded arena of open water surrounded by  
lesser and greater craft which, sycophant, lumbering  
and fluttering follow them, they appear youthful, rare

as the light of a happy eye, live with the grace  
of all that in the mind is fleckless, free and  
naturally to be desired. Now the sea which holds them

is moody, lapping their glossy sides, as if feeling  
for some slightest flaw but fails completely.  
Today no race. Then the wind comes again. The yachts

move, jockeying for a start, the signal is set and they  
are off. Now the waves strike at them but they are too  
well made, they slip through, though they take in canvas.

Arms with hands grasping seek to clutch at the prows.  
Bodies thrown recklessly in the way are cut aside.  
It is a sea of faces about them in agony, in despair

until the horror of the race dawns staggering the mind,  
the whole sea become an entanglement of watery bodies  
lost to the world bearing what they cannot hold. Broken,

beaten, desolate, reaching from the dead to be taken up  
they cry out, failing, failing! their cries rising  
in waves still as the skillful yachts pass over.

## Hymn to Love Ended

*(Imaginary translation from the Spanish)*

Through what extremes of passion  
had you come, Sappho, to the peace  
of deathless song?

As from an illness, as after drought  
the streams released to flow  
filling the fields with freshness  
the birds drinking from every twig  
and beasts from every hollow—  
bellowing, singing of the unrestraint  
to colors of a waking world.

So

after love a music streams above it.  
For what is love? But music is  
Villon beaten and cast off  
Shakespeare from wisdom's grotto  
looking doubtful at the world  
Alighieri beginning all again  
Goethe whom a rose ensnared  
Li Po the drunkard, singers whom  
love has overthrown—

To this company the birds themselves  
and the sleek beasts belong and all  
who will besides—when love is ended  
to the waking of sweetest song.

## Sunday

Small barking sounds  
Clatter of metal in a pan  
A high fretting voice  
and a low voice musical  
as a string twanged—

The tempo is evenly drawn  
give and take  
A splash of water, the  
ting a ring  
of small pieces of metal  
dropped, the clap of a door  
A tune nameless as Time—

Then the voices—  
Sound of feet barely moving  
Slowly  
And the bark, “What?”  
“The same, the same, the—”  
scrape of a chair  
clickaty tee—

“Over Labor Day they’ll  
be gone”  
“Jersey City, he’s the  
engineer—” “Ya”  
“Being on the Erie R. R.  
is quite convenient”

“No, I think they’re—”  
“I think she is. I think—”

“German-American”  
“Of course the Govern—”

. . . . .

A distant door slammed.  
Amen.



## **The Catholic Bells**

Tho' I'm no Catholic  
I listen hard when the bells  
in the yellow-brick tower  
of their new church

ring down the leaves  
ring in the frost upon them  
and the death of the flowers  
ring out the grackle

toward the south, the sky  
darkened by them, ring in  
the new baby of Mr. and Mrs.  
Krantz which cannot

for the fat of its cheeks  
open well its eyes, ring out  
the parrot under its hood  
jealous of the child

ring in Sunday morning  
and old age which adds as it  
takes away. Let them ring  
only ring! over the oil

painting of a young priest  
on the church wall advertising  
last week's Novena to St.  
Anthony, ring for the lame

young man in black with  
gaunt cheeks and wearing a  
Derby hat, who is hurrying  
to 11 o'clock Mass (the

grapes still hanging to  
the vine along the nearby  
Concordia Halle like broken  
teeth in the head of an

old man) Let them ring  
for the eyes and ring for  
the hands and ring for  
the children of my friend

who no longer hears  
them ring but with a smile  
and in a low voice speaks  
of the decisions of her

daughter and the proposals  
and betrayals of her  
husband's friends. O bells  
ring for the ringing!

the beginning and the end  
of the ringing! Ring ring  
ring ring ring ring ring!  
Catholic bells—!

## ***The Dead Baby***

Sweep the house  
    under the feet of the curious  
    holiday seekers—  
sweep under the table and the bed  
    the baby is dead—

The mother's eyes where she sits  
    by the window, unconsolated—  
have purple bags under them  
    the father—  
tall, wellspoken, pitiful  
    is the abler of these two—

Sweep the house clean  
    here is one who has gone up  
    (though problematically)  
to heaven, blindly  
    by force of the facts—  
a clean sweep  
    is one way of expressing it—

Hurry up! any minute  
    they will be bringing it  
    from the hospital—  
a white model of our lives  
    a curiosity—  
surrounded by fresh flowers

## ***A Poem for Norman MacLeod***

The revolution  
is accomplished  
noble has been  
changed to no bull

After that  
has sickered down  
slumming will  
be done on Park Ave.

Or as chief  
One Horn said to  
the constipated  
prospector:

You big fool!  
and with his knife  
gashed a balsam  
standing nearby

Gathering the  
gum that oozed out  
in a tin spoon  
it did the trick

You can do lots  
if you know  
what's around you  
No bull

***Al Que Quiere***  
***(To Him Who Wants it)***



## **Sub Terra**

Where shall I find you,  
you my grotesque fellows  
that I seek everywhere  
to make up my band?  
None, not one  
with the earthy tastes I require;  
the burrowing pride that rises  
subtly as on a bush in May.

Where are you this day,  
you my seven year locusts  
with cased wings?  
Ah my beauties how I long—!  
That harvest  
that shall be your advent—  
thrusting up through the grass,  
up under the weeds  
answering me,  
that will be satisfying!  
The light shall leap and snap  
that day as with a million lashes!

Oh, I have you; yes  
you are about me in a sense:  
playing under the blue pools  
that are my windows,—  
but they shut you out still,  
there in the half light.  
For the simple truth is  
that though I see you clear enough  
you are not there!

It is not that—it is you,  
you I want!

—God, if I could fathom  
the guts of shadows!

You to come with me  
poking into negro houses  
with their gloom and smell!  
in among children  
leaping around a dead dog!  
Mimicking  
onto the lawns of the rich!  
You!  
to go with me a-tip-toe,  
head down under heaven,  
nostrils lipping the wind!



## ***Spring Song***

Having died  
one is at great advantage  
over his fellows—  
one can pretend.

And so,  
the smell of earth  
being upon you too—  
I pretend

there is something  
temptingly foreign  
some subtle difference,  
one last amour

to be divided for  
our death-necklaces, when  
I would merely lie  
hand in hand in the dirt with you.

## ***The Shadow***

Soft as the bed in the earth  
where a stone has lain—  
so soft, so smooth and so cool  
Spring closes me in  
with her arms and her hands.

Rich as the smell  
of new earth on a stone  
that has lain breathing  
the damp through its pores—  
Spring closes me in  
with her blossomy hair  
brings dark to my eyes.

## ***Pastoral***

When I was younger  
it was plain to me  
I must make something of myself.  
Older now  
I walk back streets  
admiring the houses  
of the very poor:  
roof out of line with sides  
the yards cluttered  
with old chicken wire, ashes,  
furniture gone wrong;  
the fences and outhouses  
built of barrel-staves  
and parts of boxes, all,  
if I am fortunate,  
smeared a bluish green  
that properly weathered  
pleases me best  
of all colors.

No one  
will believe this  
of vast import to the nation.

## ***Chicory and Daisies***

### **I**

Lift your flowers  
on bitter stems  
chicory!  
Lift them up  
out of the scorched ground!  
Bear no foliage  
but give yourself  
wholly to that!  
Strain under them  
you bitter stems  
that no beast eats—  
and scorn greyness!  
Into the heat with them:  
cool!  
luxuriant! sky-blue!  
The earth cracks and  
is shriveled up;  
the wind moans piteously;  
the sky goes out  
if you should fail.

### **II**

I saw a child with daisies  
for weaving into the hair  
tear the stems  
with her teeth!

## ***Metric Figure***

There is a bird in the poplars!  
It is the sun!  
The leaves are little yellow fish  
swimming in the river.  
The bird skims above them,  
day is on his wings.  
Phoebus!  
It is he that is making  
the great gleam among the poplars!  
It is his singing  
outshines the noise  
of leaves clashing in the wind.

## **Pastoral**

The little sparrows  
hop ingenuously  
about the pavement  
quarreling  
with sharp voices  
over those things  
that interest them.  
But we who are wiser  
shut ourselves in  
on either hand  
and no one knows  
whether we think good  
or evil.

Meanwhile,  
the old man who goes about  
gathering dog-lime  
walks in the gutter  
without looking up  
and his tread  
is more majestic than  
that of the Episcopal minister  
approaching the pulpit  
of a Sunday.

These things  
astonish me beyond words.

## **Love Song**

Daisies are broken  
petals are news of the day  
stems lift to the grass tops  
they catch on shoes  
part in the middle  
leave root and leaves secure.

Black branches  
carry square leaves  
to the wood's top.  
They hold firm  
break with a roar  
show the white!

Your moods are slow  
the shedding of leaves  
and sure  
the return in May!

We walked  
in your father's grove  
and saw the great oaks  
lying with roots  
ripped from the ground.

## Gulls

My townspeople, beyond in the great world,  
are many with whom it were far more  
profitable for me to live than here with you.  
These whirr about me calling, calling!  
and for my own part I answer them, loud as I can,  
but they, being free, pass!  
I remain! Therefore, listen!  
For you will not soon have another singer.

First I say this: You have seen  
the strange birds, have you not, that sometimes  
rest upon our river in winter?  
Let them cause you to think well then of the storms  
that drive many to shelter. These things  
do not happen without reason.

And the next thing I say is this:  
I saw an eagle once circling against the clouds  
over one of our principal churches—  
Easter, it was—a beautiful day!  
three gulls came from above the river  
and crossed slowly seaward!  
Oh, I know you have your own hymns, I have heard them—  
and because I knew they invoked some great protector  
I could not be angry with you, no matter  
how much they outraged true music—

You see, it is not necessary for us to leap at each other,  
and, as I told you, in the end  
the gulls moved seaward very quietly.



## ***Winter Sunset***

Then I raised my head  
and stared out over  
the blue February waste  
to the blue bank of hill  
with stars on it  
in strings and festoons—  
but above that:  
one opaque  
stone of a cloud  
just on the hill  
left and right  
as far as I could see;  
and above that  
a red streak, then  
icy blue sky!

It was a fearful thing  
to come into a man's heart  
at that time; that stone  
over the little blinking stars  
they'd set there.

## ***In Harbor***

Surely there, among the great docks, is peace,  
my mind;  
there with the ships moored in the river.  
Go out, timid child,  
and snuggle in among the great ships talking so  
quietly.  
Maybe you will even fall asleep near them and be  
lifted into one of their laps, and in the morning—  
There is always the morning in which to remember  
it all!  
Of what are they gossiping? God knows.  
And God knows it matters little for we cannot  
understand them.  
Yet it is certainly of the sea, of that there can be  
no question.  
It is a quiet sound. Rest! That's all I care for now.  
The smell of them will put us to sleep presently.  
Smell! It is the sea water mingling here into the  
river—  
at least so it seems—perhaps it is something else—  
but what matter?  
The sea water! It is quiet and smooth here!  
How slowly they move, little by little trying  
the hawsers that drop and groan with their agony.  
Yes, it is certainly of the high sea they are talking.

## Tract

I will teach you my townspeople  
how to perform a funeral  
for you have it over a troop  
of artists—  
unless one should scour the world—  
you have the ground sense necessary.

See! the hearse leads.  
I begin with a design for a hearse.  
For Christ's sake not black—  
nor white either—and not polished!  
Let it be weathered—like a farm wagon—  
with gilt wheels (this could be  
applied fresh at small expense)  
or no wheels at all:  
a rough dray to drag over the ground.

Knock the glass out!  
My God—glass, my townspeople!  
For what purpose? Is it for the dead  
to look out or for us to see  
how well he is housed or to see  
the flowers or the lack of them—  
or what?  
To keep the rain and snow from him?  
He will have a heavier rain soon:  
pebbles and dirt and what not.  
Let there be no glass—  
and no upholstery, phew!  
and no little brass rollers  
and small easy wheels on the bottom—  
my townspeople what are you thinking of?

A rough plain hearse then  
with gilt wheels and no top at all.  
On this the coffin lies  
by its own weight.

No wreaths please—  
especially no hot house flowers.  
Some common memento is better,  
something he prized and is known by:  
his old clothes—a few books perhaps—  
God knows what! You realize  
how we are about these things  
my townspeople—  
something will be found—anything  
even flowers if he had come to that.  
So much for the hearse.

For heaven's sake though see to the driver!  
Take off the silk hat! In fact  
that's no place at all for him—  
up there unceremoniously  
dragging our friend out to his own dignity!  
Bring him down—bring him down!  
Low and inconspicuous! I'd not have him ride  
on the wagon at all—damn him—  
the undertaker's understrapper!  
Let him hold the reins  
and walk at the side  
and inconspicuously too!

Then briefly as to yourselves:  
Walk behind—as they do in France,  
seventh class, or if you ride  
Hell take curtains! Go with some show  
of inconvenience; sit openly—  
to the weather as to grief.

Or do you think you can shut grief in?  
What—from us? We who have perhaps  
nothing to lose? Share with us  
share with us—it will be money  
in your pockets.

Go now

I think you are ready.

## ***Apology***

Why do I write today?

The beauty of  
the terrible faces  
of our nonentities  
stirs me to it:

colored women  
day workers—  
old and experienced—  
returning home at dusk  
in cast off clothing  
faces like  
old Florentine oak.

Also

the set pieces  
of your faces stir me—  
leading citizens—  
but not  
in the same way.

## Promenade

### I

Well, mind, here we have  
our little son beside us:  
a little diversion before breakfast!

Come, we'll walk down the road  
till the bacon will be frying.  
We might better be idle<sup>2</sup>  
A poem might come of it<sup>2</sup>  
Oh, be useful. Save annoyance  
to Flossie and besides—the wind!  
It's cold. It blows our  
old pants out! It makes us shiver!  
See the heavy trees  
shifting their weight before it.  
Let us be trees, an old house,  
a hull with grass on it!  
The baby's arms are blue.  
Come, move! Be quieted!

### II

So. We'll sit here now  
and throw pebbles into  
this water-trickle.

Splash the water up!  
(Splash it up, Sonny!) Laugh!  
Hit it there deep under the grass.  
See it splash! Ah, mind,  
see it splash! It is alive!

Throw pieces of broken leaves  
into it. They'll pass through.  
No! Yes—Just!

Away now for the cows! But—  
It's cold!  
It's getting dark.  
It's going to rain.  
No further!

### III

Oh, then a wreath! Let's  
refresh something they  
used to write well of.

Two fern plumes. Strip them  
to the mid-rib along one side.  
Bind the tips with a grass stem.  
Bend and interwist the stalks  
at the back. So!  
Ah! now we are crowned!  
Now we are a poet!  
Quickly!  
A bunch of little flowers  
for Flossie—the little ones  
only:

a red clover, one  
blue heal-all, a sprig of  
bone-set, one primrose, -  
a head of Indian tobacco, this  
magenta speck and this  
little lavender!

Home now, my mind!—  
Sonny's arms are icy, I tell you—  
and have breakfast!

## ***Libertad! Igualidad! Fraternidad!***

You sullen pig of a man  
you force me into the mud  
with your stinking ash-cart!

Brother!

—if we were rich  
we'd stick our chests out  
and hold our heads high!

It is dreams that have destroyed us.

There is no more pride  
in horses or in rein holding.  
We sit hunched together brooding  
our fate.

Well—  
all things turn bitter in the end  
whether you choose the right or  
the left way  
and—  
dreams are not a bad thing.



## **Summer Song**

Wanderer moon  
smiling a  
faintly ironical smile  
at this  
brilliant, dew-moistened  
summer morning,—  
a detached  
sleepily indifferent  
smile, a  
wanderer's smile,—  
if I should  
buy a shirt  
your color and  
put on a necktie  
sky-blue  
where would they carry me?

## ***The Young Housewife***

At ten A.M. the young housewife  
moves about in negligee behind  
the wooden walls of her husband's house.  
I pass solitary in my car.

Then again she comes to the curb  
to call the ice-man, fish-man, and stands  
shy, uncorseted, tucking in  
stray ends of hair, and I compare her  
to a fallen leaf.

The noiseless wheels of my car  
rush with a crackling sound over  
dried leaves as I bow and pass smiling.

## **Love Song**

Sweep the house clean,  
hang fresh curtains  
in the windows  
put on a new dress  
and come with me!  
The elm is scattering  
its little loaves  
of sweet smells  
from a white sky!

Who shall hear of us  
in the time to come?  
Let him say there was  
a burst of fragrance  
from black branches.

## **Dawn**

Ecstatic bird songs pound  
the hollow vastness of the sky  
with metallic clinkings—  
beating color up into it  
at a far edge,—beating it, beating it  
with rising, triumphant ardor,—  
stirring it into warmth,  
quickenning in it a spreading change,—  
bursting wildly against it as  
dividing the horizon, a heavy sun  
lifts himself—is lifted—  
bit by bit above the edge  
of things,—runs free at last  
out into the open—! lumbering  
glorified in full release upward—  
songs cease.

## **Hero**

Fool,  
put your adventures  
into those things  
which break ships—  
not female flesh.

Let there pass  
over the mind  
the waters of  
four oceans, the airs  
of four skies!

Return hollow-bellied  
keen-eyed, hard!  
A simple scar or two.

Little girls will come  
bringing you  
roses for your button-hole.

## **Drink**

My whisky is  
a tough way of life:

The wild cherry  
continually pressing back  
peach orchards.

I am a penniless  
rumsoak.

Where shall I have that solidity  
which trees find  
in the ground?

My stuff  
is the feel of good legs  
and a broad pelvis  
under the gold hair ornaments  
of skyscrapers.

## **El Hombre**

It's a strange courage  
you give me ancient star:

Shine alone in the sunrise  
toward which you lend no part!

## **Winter Quiet**

Limb to limb, mouth to mouth  
with the bleached grass  
silver mist lies upon the back yards  
among the outhouses.

The dwarf trees  
pirouette awkwardly to it—  
whirling round on one toe;  
the big tree smiles and glances

upward!  
Tense with suppressed excitement  
the fences watch where the ground  
has humped an aching shoulder for  
the ecstasy.

## **A Prelude**

I know only the bare rocks of today.  
In these lies my brown sea-weed,—  
green quartz veins bent through the wet shale,  
in these lie my pools left by the tide—  
quiet, forgetting waves;  
on these stiffen white star fish  
on these I slip barefooted!

Whispers of the fishy air touch my body;  
“Sisters,” I say to them.

## **Trees**

Crooked, black tree  
on your little grey-black hillock,  
ridiculously raised one step toward  
the infinite summits of the night  
even you the few grey stars  
draw upward into a vague melody  
of harsh threads.

Bent as you are from straining  
against the bitter horizontals of  
a north wind,—there below you  
how easily the long yellow notes  
of poplars flow upward in a descending  
scale, each note secure in its own  
posture—singularly woven.

All voices are blent willingly  
against the heaving contra-bass  
of the dark but you alone  
warp yourself passionately to one side  
in your eagerness.



## **Canthara**

The old black-man showed me  
how he had been shocked  
in his youth  
by six women, dancing  
a set-dance, stark naked below  
the skirts raised round  
their breasts:  
                    bellies flung forward  
knees flying!  
                                    —while  
his gestures, against the  
tiled wall of the dingy bath-room,  
swished with ecstasy to  
the familiar music of  
                    his old emotion.

Winter has spent this snow  
out of envy, but spring is here!  
He sits at the breakfast table  
in his yellow hair  
and disdains even the sun  
walking outside  
in spangled slippers:

He looks out: there is  
a glare of lights  
before a theater,—  
a sparkling lady  
passes quickly to  
the seclusion of  
her carriage.

Presently  
under the dirty, wavy heaven  
of a borrowed room he will make  
reinhaled tobacco smoke  
his clouds and try them  
against the sky's limits!

## Good Night

In brilliant gas light  
I turn the kitchen spigot  
and watch the water plash  
into the clean white sink.  
On the grooved drain-board  
to one side is  
a glass filled with parsley—  
crisped green.

Waiting  
for the water to freshen—  
I glance at the spotless floor—:  
a pair of rubber sandals  
lie side by side  
under the wall-table  
all is in order for the night.

Waiting, with a glass in my hand  
—three girls in crimson satin  
pass close before me on  
the murmurous background of  
the crowded opera—

it is  
memory playing the clown—  
three vague, meaningless girls  
full of smells and  
the rustling sounds of  
cloth rubbing on cloth and  
little slippers on carpet—  
high-school French  
spoken in a loud voice!

Parsley in a glass,  
still and shining,  
brings me back. I take a drink  
and yawn deliciously.  
I am ready for bed.

## **Keller Gegen Dom**

Witness, would you—  
one more young man  
in the evening of his love  
hurrying to confession:  
steps down a gutter  
crosses a street  
goes in at a doorway  
opens for you—  
like some great flower—  
a room filled with lamplight;  
or whirls himself  
obediently to  
the curl of a hill  
some wind-dancing afternoon;  
lies for you in  
the futile darkness of  
a wall, sets stars dancing  
to the crack of a leaf—

and—leaning his head away—  
snuffs (secretly)  
the bitter powder from  
his thumb's hollow,  
takes your blessing and  
goes home to bed?

Witness instead  
whether you like it or not  
a dark vinegar-smelling place  
from which trickles  
the chuckle of  
beginning laughter.

It strikes midnight.

## **Danse Russe**

If when my wife is sleeping  
and the baby and Kathleen  
are sleeping  
and the sun is a flame-white disc  
in silken mists  
above shining trees,—  
if I in my north room  
dance naked, grotesquely  
before my mirror  
waving my shirt round my head  
and singing softly to myself:  
“I am lonely, lonely.  
I was born to be lonely,  
I am best so!”  
If I admire my arms, my face,  
my shoulders, flanks, buttocks  
against the yellow drawn shades,—

Who shall say I am not  
the happy genius of my household?

## **Mujer**

Oh, black Persian cat!  
Was not your life  
already cursed with offsprings?  
We took you for the rest to that old  
Yankee farm,—so lonely  
and with so many field mice  
in the long grass—  
and you return to us  
in this condition—!

Oh, black Persian cat.

## ***Portrait of a Woman in Bed***

There's my things  
drying in the corner:  
that blue skirt  
joined to the grey shirt—

I'm sick of trouble!  
Lift the covers  
if you want me  
and you'll see  
the rest of my clothes—  
though it would be cold  
lying with nothing on!

I won't work  
and I've got no cash.  
What are you going to do  
about it?  
—and no jewelry  
(the crazy fools)

But I've my two eyes  
and a smooth face  
and here's this! look!  
it's high!

There's brains and blood  
in there—  
my name's Robitza!  
Corsets  
can go to the devil—  
and drawers along with them—  
What do I care!



My two boys?  
—they're keen!  
Let the rich lady  
care for them—  
they'll beat the school  
or  
let them go to the gutter—  
that ends trouble.

This house is empty  
isn't it?  
Then it's mine  
because I need it.  
Oh, I won't starve  
while there's the bible  
to make them feed me.

Try to help me  
if you want trouble  
or leave me alone—  
that ends trouble.

The country physician  
is a damned fool  
and you  
can go to hell!

You could have closed the door  
when you came in;  
do it when you go out.  
I'm tired.

## Virtue

Now? Why—  
whirlpools of  
orange and purple flame  
feather twists of chrome  
on a green ground  
funneling down upon  
the steaming phallus-head  
of the mad sun himself—  
blackened crimson!

Now?

Why—  
it is the smile of her  
the smell of her  
the vulgar inviting mouth of her  
It is—Oh, nothing new  
nothing that lasts  
an eternity, nothing worth  
putting out to interest,  
nothing—  
but the fixing of an eye  
concretely upon emptiness!

Come! here are—  
cross-eyed men, a boy  
with a patch, men walking  
in their shirts, men in hats  
dark men, a pale man  
with little black moustaches  
and a dirty white coat,  
fat men with pudgy faces,  
thin faces, crooked faces  
slit eyes, grey eyes, black eyes

old men with dirty beards,  
men in vests with  
gold watch chains. Come!

## **Smell!**

Oh strong-ridged and deeply hollowed  
nose of mine! what will you not be smelling?  
What tactless asses we are, you and I boney nose  
always indiscriminate, always unashamed,  
and now it is the souring flowers of the bedraggled  
poplars: a festering pulp on the wet earth  
beneath them. With what deep thirst  
we quicken our desires  
to that rank odor of a passing springtime!  
Can you not be decent? Can you not reserve your ardors  
for something less unlovely? What girl will care  
for us, do you think, if we continue in these ways?  
Must you taste everything? Must you know everything?  
Must you have a part in everything?

## **The Ogre**

Sweet child,  
little girl with well-shaped legs  
you cannot touch the thoughts  
I put over and under and around you.  
This is fortunate for they would  
burn you to an ash otherwise.  
Your petals would be quite curled up.

This is all beyond you—no doubt,  
yet you do feel the brushings  
of the fine needles;  
the tentative lines of your whole body  
prove it to me;  
so does your fear of me,  
your shyness;  
likewise the toy baby cart  
that you are pushing—  
and besides, mother has begun  
to dress your hair in a knot.  
These are my excuses.

## ***Sympathetic Portrait of a Child***

The murderer's little daughter  
who is barely ten years old  
jerks her shoulders  
right and left  
so as to catch a glimpse of me  
without turning round.

Her skinny little arms  
wrap themselves  
thus way then that  
reversely about her body!  
Nervously  
she crushes her straw hat  
about her eyes  
and tilts her head  
to deepen the shadow—  
smiling excitedly!

As best she can  
she hides herself  
in the full sunlight  
her cordy legs writhing  
beneath the little flowered dress  
that leaves them bare  
from mid-thigh to ankle—

Why has she chosen me  
for the knife  
that darts along her smile?

## **Riposte**

Love is like water or the air  
my townspeople;  
it cleanses, and dissipates evil gases.  
It is like poetry too  
and for the same reasons.

Love is so precious  
my townspeople  
that if I were you I would  
have it under lock and key—  
like the air or the Atlantic or  
like poetry!

**K. McB.**

You exquisite chunk of mud  
Kathleen—just like  
any other chunk of mud!  
—especially April!  
Curl up round their shoes  
when they try to step on you,  
spoil the polish!  
I shall laugh till I am sick  
at their amazement.  
Do they expect the ground to be  
always solid?  
Give them the slip then;  
let them sit in you;  
soil their pants;  
teach them a dignity  
that is dignity, the dignity  
of mud!

Lie basking in  
the sun then—fast asleep!  
Even become dust on occasion.

## ***The Old Men***

Old men who have studied  
every leg show  
in the city  
Old men cut from touch  
by the perfumed music—  
polished or fleeced skulls  
that stand before  
the whole theater  
in silent attitudes  
of attention,—  
old men who have taken precedence  
over young men  
and even over dark-faced  
husbands whose minds  
are a street with arc-lights.  
Solitary old men for whom  
we find no excuses—  
I bow my head in shame  
for those who malign you.  
Old men  
the peaceful beer of impotence  
be yours!



## **Spring Strains**

In a tissue-thin monotone of blue-grey buds  
crowded erect with desire against the sky  
tense blue-grey twigs  
slenderly anchoring them down, drawing  
them in—

two blue-grey birds chasing  
a third struggle in circles, angles,  
swift convergings to a point that bursts  
instantly!

Vibrant bowing limbs  
pull downward, sucking in the sky  
that bulges from behind, plastering itself  
against them in packed rifts, rock blue  
and dirty orange!

But—

(Hold hard, rigid jointed trees!)  
the blinding and red-edged sun-blur—  
creeping energy, concentrated  
counterforce—welds sky, buds, trees,  
rivets them in one puckering hold!  
Sticks through! Pulls the whole  
counter-pulling mass upward, to the right  
locks even the opaque, not yet defined  
ground in a terrific drag that is  
loosening the very tap-roots!

On a tissue-thin monotone of blue-grey buds  
two blue-grey birds, chasing a third,  
at full cry! Now they are  
flung outward and up—disappearing suddenly!

## ***A Portrait in Greys***

Will it never be possible  
to separate you from your greyness?  
Must you be always sinking backwards  
into your grey-brown landscapes—and trees  
always in the distance, always against  
a grey sky?

Must I be always  
moving counter to you? Is there no place  
where we can be at peace together  
and the motion of our drawing apart  
be altogether taken up?

I see myself  
standing upon your shoulders touching  
a grey, broken sky—  
but you, weighted down with me,  
yet gripping my ankles,—move  
laboriously on,  
where it is level and undisturbed by colors.

## ***Pastoral***

If I say I have heard voices  
who will believe me?

“None has dipped his hand  
in the black waters of the sky  
nor picked the yellow lilies  
that sway on their clear stems  
and no tree has waited  
long enough nor still enough  
to touch fingers with the moon.”

I looked and there were little frogs  
with puffed-out throats,  
singing in the slime.

## January Morning

**SUITE:**

# I

I have discovered that most of  
the beauties of travel are due to  
the strange hours we keep to see them:

the domes of the Church of the Paulist Fathers in Weehawken against a smoky dawn—the heart stirred—are beautiful as Saint Peters approached after years of anticipation.

## II

Though the operation was postponed  
I saw the tall probationers  
in their tan uniforms                   hurrying to breakfast!

### III

—and from basement entries  
neatly coiffed, middle aged gentlemen  
with orderly moustaches and  
well-brushed coats

## IV

—and the sun, dipping into the avenues  
streaking the tops of

the irregular red houselets,  
and  
the gay shadows dropping and dropping.

## V

—and a young horse with a green bed-quilt  
on his withers shaking his head.  
bared teeth and nozzle high in the air!

## VI

—and a semicircle of dirt-colored men  
about a fire bursting from an old  
ash can,

## VII

—and the worn,  
blue car rails (like the sky!)  
gleaming among the cobbles!

## VIII

—and the rickety ferry-boat “Arden”!  
What an object to be called “Arden”  
among the great piers,—on the  
ever new river!

“Put me a Touchstone  
at the wheel, white gulls, and we’ll  
follow the ghost of the *Half Moon*  
to the North West Passage—and through!  
(at Albany!) for all that!”

## IX

Exquisite brown waves—long  
circlets of silver moving over you!  
enough with crumbling ice crusts among you!  
The sky has come down to you,  
lighter than tiny bubbles, face to  
face with you!

His spirit is  
a white gull with delicate pink feet  
and a snowy breast for you to  
hold to your lips delicately!

## X

The young doctor is dancing with happiness  
in the sparkling wind, alone  
at the prow of the ferry! He notices  
the curdy barnacles and broken ice crusts  
left at the slip's base by the low tide  
and thinks of summer and green  
shell-crustled ledges among  
the emerald eel-grass!

## XI

Who knows the Palisades as I do  
knows the river breaks east from them  
above the city—but they continue south  
—under the sky—to bear a crest of  
little peering houses that brighten  
with dawn behind the moody  
water-loving giants of Manhattan.

## XII

Long yellow rushes bending  
above the white snow patches;  
purple and gold ribbon  
of the distant wood

                    what an angle  
you make with each other as  
you lie there in contemplation.

## XIII

Work hard all your young days  
and they'll find you too, some morning  
staring up under  
your chiffonier at its warped  
bass-wood bottom and your soul—  
out!

—among the little sparrows  
behind the shutter.

## XIV

—and the flapping flags are at  
half mast for the dead admiral.

## XV

All this—

                    was for you, old woman.  
I wanted to write a poem  
that you would understand.  
For what good is it to me

if you can't understand it?

But you got to try hard—

But—

Well, you know how  
the young girls run giggling  
on Park Avenue after dark  
when they ought to be home in bed?

Well,  
that's the way it is with me somehow.



## ***To a Solitary Disciple***

Rather notice, mon cher,  
that the moon is  
tilted above  
the point of the steeple  
than that its color  
is shell-pink.

Rather observe  
that it is early morning  
than that the sky  
is smooth  
as a turquoise.

Rather grasp  
how the dark  
converging lines  
of the steeple  
meet at the pinnacle—  
perceive how  
its little ornament  
tries to stop them—

See how it fails!  
See how the converging lines  
of the hexagonal spire  
escape upward—  
receding, dividing!  
—sepals  
that guard and contain  
the flower!

Observe  
how motionless

the eaten moon  
lies in the protecting lines.  
It is true:  
in the light colors  
of morning

brown-stone and slate  
shine orange and dark blue.

But observe  
the oppressive weight  
of the squat edifice!  
Observe  
the jasmine lightness  
of the moon.

## Ballet

Are you not weary,  
great gold cross  
shining in the wind—  
are you not weary  
of seeing the stars  
turning over you  
and the sun  
going to his rest  
and you frozen with  
a great lie  
that leaves you  
rigid as a knight  
on a marble coffin?

—and you?  
higher, still,  
                                robin,  
untwisting a song  
from the bare  
top-twigs,  
are you not  
weary of labor,  
even the labor of  
a song?  
Come down—join me  
for I am lonely.

First it will be  
a quiet pace  
to ease our stiffness  
but as the west yellows  
you will be ready!  
Here in the middle

of the roadway  
we will fling  
ourselves round  
with dust lilies  
till we are bound in  
their twining stems!  
We will tear  
their flowers  
with arms flashing!

And when  
the astonished stars  
push aside  
their curtains  
they will see us  
fall exhausted where  
wheels and  
the pounding feet  
of horses  
will crush forth  
our laughter.

## ***Dedication for a Plot of Ground***

This plot of ground  
facing the waters of this inlet  
is dedicated to the living presence of  
Emily Dickinson Wellcome  
who was born in England, married,  
lost her husband and with  
her five year old son  
sailed for New York in a two-master,  
was driven to the Azores;  
ran adrift on Fire Island shoal,  
met her second husband  
in a Brooklyn boarding house,  
went with him to Puerto Rico  
bore three more children, lost  
her second husband, lived hard  
for eight years in St. Thomas,  
Puerto Rico, San Domingo, followed  
the oldest son to New York,  
lost her daughter, lost her "baby",  
seized the two boys of  
the oldest son by the second marriage  
mothered them—they being  
motherless—fought for them  
against the other grandmother  
and the aunts, brought them here  
summer after summer, defended  
herself here against thieves,  
storms, sun, fire,  
against flies, against girls  
that came smelling about, against  
drought, against weeds, storm-tides,  
neighbors, weasels that stole her chickens,  
against the weakness of her own hands,

against the growing strength of  
the boys, against wind, against  
the stones, against trespassers,  
against rents, against her own mind

She grubbed this earth with her own hands,  
domineered over this grass plot,  
blackguarded her oldest son  
into buying it, lived here fifteen years,  
attained a final loneliness and—

If you can bring nothing to this place  
but your carcass, keep out.

## **Conquest**

*(Dedicated to F. W.)*

Hard, chilly colors:  
straw-grey, frost-grey  
the grey of frozen ground:  
and you, O Sun,  
close above the horizon!  
It is I holds you—  
half against the sky  
half against a black tree trunk  
icily resplendent!

Lie there, blue city, mine at last—  
rimming the banked blue-grey  
and rise, indescribable smoky-yellow  
into the overpowering white!

## ***First Version: 1915***

What have I to say to you  
When we shall meet?  
Yet—  
I lie here thinking of you.

The stain of love  
Is upon the world.  
Yellow, yellow, yellow,  
It eats into the leaves,  
Smears with saffron  
The horned branches that lean  
Heavily  
Against a smooth purple sky.

There is no light—  
Only a honey-thick stain  
That drips from leaf to leaf  
And limb to limb  
Spoiling the colors  
Of the whole world.

I am alone.  
The weight of love  
Has buoyed me up  
Till my head  
Knocks against the sky.

See me!  
My hair is dripping with nectar—  
Starlings carry it  
On their black wings.  
See at last  
My arms and my hands  
Are lying idle.

How can I tell  
If I shall ever love you again  
As I do now?

## **Love Song**

I lie here thinking of you.—

the stain of love  
is upon the world!  
Yellow, yellow, yellow  
it eats into the leaves,  
smears with saffron  
the horned branches that lean  
heavily  
against a smooth purple sky!  
There is no light  
only a honey-thick stain  
that drips from leaf to leaf  
and limb to limb  
spoiling the colors  
of the whole world—

you far off there under  
the wine-red selva of the west!



***Fish***

***Romance Moderne***



## **Fish**

It is the whales that drive  
the small fish into the fiords.  
I have seen forty or fifty  
of them in the water at one time.  
I have been in a little boat  
when the water was boiling  
on all sides of us  
from them swimming underneath.

The noise of the herring  
can be heard nearly a mile.  
So thick in the water, they are,  
you can't dip the oars in.  
All silver!

And all those millions of fish  
must be taken, each one, by hand.  
The women and children  
pull out a little piece  
under the throat with their fingers  
so that the brine gets inside.

I have seen thousands of barrels  
packed with the fish on the shore.

In winter they set the gill-nets  
for the cod. Hundreds of them  
are caught each night.  
In the morning the men  
pull in the nets and fish  
altogether in the boats.  
Cod so big—I have seen—  
that when a man held one up

above his head  
the tail swept the ground.

Sardines, mackerel, anchovies  
all of these. And in the rivers  
trout and salmon. I have seen  
a net set at the foot of a falls  
and in the morning sixty trout in it.

But I guess there are not  
such fish in Norway nowadays.

On the Lofoten Islands—  
till I was twelve.  
Not a tree or a shrub on them.  
But in summer  
with the sun never gone  
the grass is higher than here.

The sun circles the horizon.  
Between twelve and one at night  
it is very low, near the sea,  
to the north. Then  
it rises a little, slowly,  
till midday, then down again  
and so for three months, getting  
higher at first, then lower,  
until it disappears—

In winter the snow is often  
as deep as the ceiling of this room.

If you go there you will see  
many Englishmen  
near the falls and on the bridges  
fishing, fishing.

They will stand there for hours  
to catch the fish.

Near the shore  
where the water is twenty feet or so  
you can see the kingflounders  
on the sand. They have  
red spots on the side. Men come  
in boats and stick them  
with long pointed poles.

Have you seen how the Swedes drink tea?  
So, in the saucer. They blow it  
and turn it this way then that: so.

Tall, gaunt  
great drooping nose, eyes dark-circled,  
the voice slow and smiling.

I have seen boys stand  
where the stream is narrow  
a foot each side on two rocks  
and grip the trout as they pass through.  
They have a special way to hold them,  
in the gills, so. The long  
fingers arched like grapplehooks.

Then the impatient silence  
while a little man said:

The English are great sportsmen.  
At the winter resorts  
where I stayed  
they were always the first up  
in the morning, the first

on with the skis.  
I once saw a young Englishman  
worth seventy million pounds—

You do not know the north.  
—and you will see perhaps *huldra*  
with long tails  
and all blue, from the night,  
and the *nekke*, half man and half fish.  
When they see one of them  
they know some boat will be lost.

## **Romance Moderne**

Tracks of rain and light linger in  
the spongy greens of a nature whose  
flickering mountain—bulging nearer,  
ebbing back into the sun  
hollowing itself away to hold a lake,—  
or brown stream rising and falling  
at the roadside, turning about,  
churning itself white, drawing  
green in over it,—plunging glassy funnels  
fall—

And—the other world—  
the windshield a blunt barrier:  
Talk to me. Sh! they would hear us.  
—the backs of their heads facing us—  
The stream continues its motion of  
a hound running over rough ground.

Trees vanish—reappear—vanish:  
detached dance of gnomes—as a talk  
dodging remarks, glows and fades.  
—The unseen power of words—  
And now that a few of the moves  
are clear the first desire is  
to fling oneself out at the side into  
the other dance, to other music.

Peer Gynt. Rip Van Winkle. Diana.  
If I were young I would try a new alignment—  
alight nimbly from the car, Good-bye!—  
Childhood companions linked two and two  
criss-cross: four, three, two, one.  
Back into self, tentacles withdrawn.

Feel about in warm self-flesh.  
Since childhood, since childhood!  
Childhood is a toad in the garden, a  
happy toad. All toads are happy  
and belong in gardens. A toad to Diana!

Lean forward. Punch the steersman  
behind the ear. Twirl the wheel!  
Over the edge! Screams! Crash!  
The end. I sit above my head—  
a little removed—or  
a thin wash of rain on the roadway  
—I am never afraid when he is driving,—  
interposes new direction,  
rides us sidewise, unforseen  
into the ditch! All threads cut!  
Death! Black. The end. The very end—

I would sit separate weighing a  
small red handful: the dirt of these parts,  
sliding mists sheeting the alders  
against the touch of fingers creeping  
to mine. All stuff of the blind emotions.  
But—stirred, the eye seizes  
for the first time—The eye awake!—  
anything, a dirt bank with green stars  
of scrawny weed flattened upon it under  
a weight of air—For the first time!—  
or a yawning depth: Big!  
Swim around in it, through it—  
all directions and find  
vitreous seawater stuff—  
God how I love you!—or, as I say,  
a plunge into the ditch. The end. I sit  
examining my red handful. Balancing  
—this—in and out—agh.



Love you? It's  
a fire in the blood, willy-nilly!  
It's the sun coming up in the morning.  
Ha, but it's the grey moon too, already up  
in the morning. You are slow.  
Men are not friends where it concerns  
a woman. Fighters. Playfellows.  
White round thighs! Youth! Sighs—!  
It's the fillip of novelty. It's—

Mountains. Elephants humping along  
against the sky—indifferent to  
light withdrawing its tattered shreds,  
worn out with embraces. It's  
the fillip of novelty. It's a fire in the blood.

Oh, get a flannel shirt, white flannel  
or pongee. You'd look so well!  
I married you because I liked your nose.  
I wanted you! I wanted you  
in spite of all they'd say—

Rain and light, mountain and rain,  
rain and river. Will you love me always?  
—A car overturned and two crushed bodies  
under it.—Always! Always!  
And the white moon already up.  
White. Clean. All the colors.  
A good head, backed by the eye—awake!  
backed by the emotions—blind—  
River and mountain, light and rain—or  
rain, rock, light, trees—divided:  
rain-light counter rocks—trees or  
trees counter rain-light-rocks or—

Myriads of counter processions

crossing and recrossing, regaining  
the advantage, buying here, selling there  
—You are sold cheap everywhere in town!—  
lingering, touching fingers, withdrawing  
gathering forces into blares, hummocks,  
peaks and rivers—river meeting rock  
—I wish that you were lying there dead  
and I sitting here beside you.—  
It's the grey moon—over and over.  
It's the clay of these parts.

## ***Sour Grapes***



## ***The Late Singer***

Here it is spring again  
and I still a young man!  
I am late at my singing.  
The sparrow with the black rain on his breast  
has been at his cadenzas for two weeks past.  
What is it that is dragging at my heart?  
The grass by the back door  
is stiff with sap.  
The old maples are opening  
their branches of brown and yellow moth-flowers.  
A moon hangs in the blue  
in the early afternoons over the marshes.  
I am late at my singing.

## A Celebration

A middle-northern March, now as always—  
gusts from the South broken against cold winds—  
but from under, as if a slow hand lifted a tide,  
it moves—not into April—into a second March,

the old skin of wind-clear scales dropping  
upon the mold. this is the shadow projects the tree  
upward causing the sun to shine in his sphere.

So we will put on our pink felt hat—new last year!  
—newer this by virtue of brown eyes turning back  
the seasons—and let us walk to the orchid-house,  
see the flowers will take the prize tomorrow  
at the Palace.

Stop here, these are our oleanders.  
When they are in bloom—

You would waste words  
It is clearer to me than if the pink  
were on the branch. It would be a searching in  
a colored cloud to reveal that which now, huskless,  
shows the very reason for their being.

And these the orange-trees, in blossom—no need  
to tell with this weight of perfume in the air.  
If it were not so dark in this shed one could better  
see the white.

It is that very perfume  
has drawn the darkness down among the leaves.  
Do I speak clearly enough?  
It is this darkness reveals that which darkness alone  
loosens and sets spinning on waxen wings—  
not the touch of a finger-tip, not the motion  
of a sigh. A too heavy sweetness proves

its own caretaker.

And here are the orchids!

Never having seen  
such gaiety I will read these flowers for you:  
This is an old January, died—in Villon's time.  
Snow, this is and this the stain of violet  
grew in that place the spring that foresaw its own doom.

And this, a certain July from Iceland.  
a young woman of that place  
breathed it toward the South. It took root there.  
The color ran true but the plant is small.

This falling spray of snow-flakes is  
a handful of dead Februaries  
prayed into flower by Rafael Arevalo Martinez  
of Guatemala.

Here's that old friend who  
went by my side for so many years, this full, fragile  
head of veined lavender. Oh that April  
that we first went with our stiff lusts  
leaving the city behind, out to the green hill—  
May, they said she was. A hand for all of us:  
this branch of blue butterflies tied to this stem.

June is a yellow cup I'll not name; August  
the over-heavy one. And here are—  
russet and shiny, all but March. And March?  
Ah, March—

Flowers are a tiresome pastime.  
One has a wish to shake them from their pots  
root and stem, for the sun to gnaw.

Walk out again into the cold and saunter home  
to the fire. This day has blossomed long enough.  
I have wiped out the red night and lit a blaze

instead which will at least warm our hands  
and stir up the talk.

I think we have kept fair time.  
Time is a green orchid.

## **April**

If you had come away with me  
into another state  
we had been quiet together.  
But there the sun coming up  
out of the nothing beyond the lake was  
too low in the sky,  
there was too great a pushing  
against him,  
too much of sumac buds, pink  
in the head  
with the clear gum upon them,  
too many opening hearts of lilac leaves,  
too many, too many swollen  
limp poplar tassels on the  
bare branches!  
It was too strong in the air.  
I had no rest against that  
springtime!  
The pounding of the hoofs on the  
raw sods  
stayed with me half through the night.  
I awoke smiling but tired.



## ***At Night***

The stars, that are small lights—  
now that I know them foreign,  
uninterfering, like nothing  
in my life—I walk by their sparkle  
relieved and comforted. Or when  
the moon moves slowly up among them  
with flat shine then the night  
has a novel light in it—curved  
curiously in a thin half-circle

## ***Berket and the Stars***

A day on the boulevards chosen out of ten years of  
student poverty! One best day out of ten good ones.  
Berket in high spirits—"Ha, oranges! Let's have one!"  
And he made to snatch an orange from a vendor's cart.

Now so clever was the deception, so nicely timed  
to the full sweep of certain wave summits,  
that the rumor of the thing has come down through  
three generations—which is relatively forever!

## A Good Night

Go to sleep—though of course you will not—  
to tideless waves thundering slantwise against  
strong embankments, rattle and swish of spray  
dashed thirty feet high, caught by the lake wind,  
scattered and strewn broadcast in over the steady  
car rails! Sleep, sleep! Gulls' cries in a wind-gust  
broken by the wind; calculating wings set above  
the field of waves breaking.

Go to sleep to the lunge between foam-crests,  
refuse churned in the recoil. Food! Food!  
Offal! Offal! that holds them in the air, wave-white  
for the one purpose, feather upon feather, the wild  
chill in their eyes, the hoarseness in their voices—  
sleep, sleep . . .

Gentlefooted crowds are treading out your lullaby.  
Their arms nudge, they brush shoulders,  
hitch this way then that, mass and surge at the crossings—  
lullaby, lullaby! The wild-fowl police whistles,  
the enraged roar of the traffic, machine shrieks:  
it is all to put you to sleep,  
to soften your limbs in relaxed postures,  
and that your head slip sidewise, and your hair loosen  
and fall over your eyes and over your mouth,  
brushing your lips wistfully that you may dream,  
sleep and dream—

A black fungus springs out about lonely church doors—  
sleep, sleep. The night, coming down upon  
the wet boulevard, would start you awake with his  
message, to have in at your window. Pay no  
heed to him. He storms at your sill with  
cooings, with gesticulations, curses!  
You will not let him in. He would keep you from sleeping.

He would have you sit under your desk lamp  
brooding, pondering, he would have you  
slide out the drawer, take up the ornamented dagger  
and handle it. It is late, it is nineteen-nineteen—  
go to sleep, his cries are a lullaby;  
his jabbering is a sleep-well-my-baby; he is  
a crackbrained messenger.

The maid waking you in the morning  
when you are up and dressing  
the rustle of your clothes as you raise them—  
it is the same tune.

At the table the cold, greenish, split grapefruit, its juice  
on the tongue, the clink of the spoon in  
your coffee, the toast odors say it over and over.

The open street-door lets in the breath of  
the morning wind from over the lake.  
The bus coming to a halt grinds from its sullen brakes—  
lullaby, lullaby. The crackle of a newspaper,  
the movement of the troubled coat beside you—  
sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep . . .  
It is the sting of snow, the burning liquor of  
the moonlight, the rush of rain in the gutters packed  
with dead leaves: go to sleep, go to sleep.  
And the night passes—and never passes—

## ***Overture to a Dance of Locomotives***

### **I**

Men with picked voices chant the names  
of cities in a huge gallery: promises  
that pull through descending stairways  
to a deep rumbling.

The rubbing feet  
of those coming to be carried quicken a  
grey pavement into soft light that rocks  
to and fro, under the domed ceiling,  
across and across from pale  
earthcolored walls of bare limestone.

Covertly the hands of a great clock  
go round and round! Were they to  
move quickly and at once the whole  
secret would be out and the shuffling  
of all ants be done forever.

A leaning pyramid of sunlight, narrowing  
out at a high window, moves by the clock;  
discordant hands straining out from  
a center: inevitable postures infinitely  
repeated—

two—twofour—twoeight!

Porters in red hats run on narrow platforms.

This way ma'am!

—important not to take  
the wrong train!

Lights from the concrete  
ceiling hang crooked but—

Poised horizontal  
on glittering parallels the dingy cylinders  
packed with a warm glow—inviting entry—  
pull against the hour. But brakes can  
hold a fixed posture till—

The whistle!

Not twoeight. Not twofour. Two!

Gliding windows. Colored cooks sweating  
in a small kitchen. Taillights—

In time· twofour!

In time· twoeight!

—rivers are tunneled: trestles  
cross oozy swampland: wheels repeating  
the same gesture remain relatively  
stationary rails forever parallel  
return on themselves infinitely.

The dance is sure.

## ***The Desolate Field***

Vast and grey, the sky  
is a simulacrum  
to all but him whose days  
are vast and grey, and—  
In the tall, dried grasses  
a goat stirs  
with nozzle searching the ground.  
—my head is in the air  
but who am I . . ?  
And amazed my heart leaps  
at the thought of love  
vast and grey  
yearning silently over me.

## ***Willow Poem***

It is a willow when summer is over,  
a willow by the river  
from which no leaf has fallen nor  
bitten by the sun  
turned orange or crimson.  
The leaves cling and grow paler,  
swing and grow paler  
over the swirling waters of the river  
as if loath to let go,  
they are so cool, so drunk with  
the swirl of the wind and of the river—  
oblivious to winter,  
the last to let go and fall  
into the water and on the ground.

## ***Approach of Winter***

The half-stripped trees  
struck by a wind together,  
bending all,  
the leaves flutter drily  
and refuse to let go  
or driven like hail  
stream bitterly out to one side  
and fall  
where the salvias, hard carmine,—  
like no leaf that ever was—  
edge the bare garden.

## ***January***

Again I reply to the triple winds  
running chromatic fifths of derision  
outside my window:

Play louder.

You will not succeed. I am  
bound more to my sentences  
the more you batter at me  
to follow you.

And the wind,  
as before, fingers perfectly  
its derisive music.

## **Blizzard**

Snow:  
years of anger following  
hours that float idly down—  
the blizzard  
drifts its weight  
deeper and deeper for three days  
or sixty years, eh? Then  
the sun! a clutter of  
yellow and blue flakes—  
Hairy looking trees stand out  
in long alleys  
over a wild solitude.  
The man turns and there—  
his solitary tracks stretched out  
upon the world.



## **Complaint**

They call me and I go.  
It is a frozen road  
past midnight, a dust  
of snow caught  
in the rigid wheeltracks.  
The door opens.  
I smile, enter and  
shake off the cold.  
Here is a great woman  
on her side in the bed.  
She is sick,  
perhaps vomiting,  
perhaps laboring  
to give birth to  
a tenth child. Joy! Joy!  
Night is a room  
darkened for lovers,  
through the jealousies the sun  
has sent one gold needle!  
I pick the hair from her eyes  
and watch her misery  
with compassion.

## ***To Waken An Old Lady***

Old age is  
a flight of small  
cheeping birds  
skimming  
bare trees  
above a snow glaze.  
Gaining and failing  
they are buffeted  
by a dark wind—  
But what?  
On harsh weedstalks  
the flock has rested,  
the snow  
is covered with broken  
seedhusks  
and the wind tempered  
by a shrill  
piping of plenty.

## **Winter Trees**

All the complicated details  
of the attiring and  
the disattiring are completed!  
A liquid moon  
moves gently among  
the long branches.  
Thus having prepared their buds  
against a sure winter  
the wise trees  
stand sleeping in the cold.

## **The Dark Day**

A three-day-long rain from the east—  
an interminable talking, talking  
of no consequence—patter, patter, patter.  
Hand in hand little winds  
blow the thin streams aslant.  
Warm. Distance cut off. Seclusion.  
A few passers-by, drawn in upon themselves,  
hurry from one place to another.  
Winds of the white poppy! there is no escape!—  
An interminable talking, talking,  
talking . . . it has happened before.  
Backward, backward, backward.

## **Spring Storm**

The sky has given over  
its bitterness.  
Out of the dark change  
all day long  
rain falls and falls  
as if it would never end.  
Still the snow keeps  
its hold on the ground.  
But water, water  
from a thousand runnels'  
It collects swiftly,  
dappled with black  
cuts a way for itself  
through green ice in the gutters.  
Drop after drop it falls  
from the withered grass-stems  
of the overhanging embankment.

## **Thursday**

I have had my dream—like others—  
and it has come to nothing, so that  
I remain now carelessly  
with feet planted on the ground  
and look up at the sky—  
feeling my clothes about me,  
the weight of my body in my shoes,  
the rim of my hat, air passing in and out  
at my nose—and decide to dream no more.

## ***The Cold Night***

It is cold. The white moon  
is up among her scattered stars—  
like the bare thighs of  
the Police Sergeant's wife—among  
her five children . . .

No answer. Pale shadows lie upon  
the frosted grass. One answer:  
It is midnight, it is still  
and it is cold . . . !

White thighs of the sky! a  
new answer out of the depths of  
my male belly: In April . . .  
In April I shall see again—In April!  
the round and perfect thighs  
of the Police Sergeant's wife  
perfect still after many babies.  
Oya!

## ***To Be Closely Written On A Small Piece Of Paper Which Folded Into A Tight Lozenge Will Fit Any Girl's Locket***

Lo the leaves  
Upon the new autumn grass—  
Look at them well . . . !

## ***The Young Laundryman***

Ladies, I crave your indulgence for  
My friend Wu Kee; young, agile, clear-eyed  
And clean-limbed, his muscles ripple  
Under the thin blue shirt; and his naked feet, in  
Their straw sandals, lift at the heels, shift and  
Find new postures continually.

Your husband's shirts to wash, please, for Wu Kee.

## ***Time The Hangman***

Poor old Abner, poor old white-haired nigger!  
I remember when you were so strong  
you hung yourself by a rope round the neck  
in Doc Hollister's barn to prove you could beat  
the faker in the circus—and it didn't kill you.  
Now your face is in your hands, and your elbows  
are on your knees, and you are silent and broken.

## ***To a Friend***

Well, Lizzie Anderson! seventeen men—and  
the baby hard to find a father for!

What will the good Father in Heaven say  
to the local judge if he do not solve this problem?  
A little two-pointed smile and—pouff!—  
the law is changed into a mouthful of phrases.

## ***The Gentle Man***

I feel the caress of my own fingers  
on my own neck as I place my collar  
and think pityingly  
of the kind women I have known.

## ***The Sougning Wind***

Some leaves hang late, some fall  
before the first frost—so goes  
the tale of winter branches and old bones.

## ***Spring***

O my grey hairs!  
You are truly white as plum blossoms.

## ***Play***

Subtle, clever brain, wiser than I am,  
by what devious means do you contrive  
to remain idle? Teach me, O master.

## ***Lines***

Leaves are grey green,  
the glass broken, bright green.

## ***The Poor***

By constantly tormenting them  
with reminders of the lice in  
their children's hair, the  
School Physician first  
brought their hatred down on him.  
But by this familiarity  
they grew used to him, and so,  
at last,  
took him for their friend and adviser.



## ***Complete Destruction***

It was an icy day,  
We buried the cat,  
then took her box  
and set match to it

in the back yard.  
Those fleas that escaped  
earth and fire  
died by the cold.

## ***Memory of April***

You say love is this, love is that:  
Poplar tassels, willow tendrils  
the wind and the rain comb,  
tinkle and drip, tinkle and drip—  
branches drifting apart. Hagh!  
Love has not even visited this country.

## ***Daisy***

The dayseye hugging the earth  
in August, ha! Spring is  
gone down in purple,  
weeds stand high in the corn,  
the rainbeaten furrow  
is clotted with sorrel  
and crabgrass, the  
branch is black under  
the heavy mass of the leaves—  
The sun is upon a  
slender green stem  
ribbed lengthwise.  
He lies on his back—  
it is a woman also—  
he regards his former  
majesty and  
round the yellow center,  
split and creviced and done into  
minute flowerheads, he sends out  
his twenty rays—a little  
and the wind is among them  
to grow cool there!

One turns the thing over  
in his hand and looks  
at it from the rear: brownedged,  
green and pointed scales  
armor his yellow.

But turn and turn,  
the crisp petals remain  
brief, translucent, greenfastened,  
barely touching at the edges:  
blades of limpid seashell.

## **Primrose**

Yellow, yellow, yellow, yellow!

It is not a color.

It is summer!

It is the wind on a willow,  
the lap of waves, the shadow  
under a bush, a bird, a bluebird,  
three herons, a dead hawk  
rotting on a pole—

Clear yellow!

It is a piece of blue paper  
in the grass or a threecluster of  
green walnuts swaying, children  
playing croquet or one boy  
fishing, a man

swinging his pink fists  
as he walks—

It is ladysthumb, forget-me-nots  
in the ditch, moss under  
the flange of the carrail, the  
wavy lines in split rock, a  
great oaktree—

It is a disinclination to be  
five red petals or a rose, it is  
a cluster of birdsbreast flowers  
on a red stem six feet high,  
four open yellow petals  
above sepals curled

backward into reverse spikes—

Tufts of purple grass spot the  
green meadow and clouds the sky.

## **Queen-Ann's-Lace**

Her body is not so white as  
anemone petals nor so smooth—nor  
so remote a thing. It is a field  
of the wild carrot taking  
the field by force; the grass  
does not raise above it.  
Here is no question of whiteness,  
white as can be, with a purple mole  
at the center of each flower.  
Each flower is a hand's span  
of her whiteness. Wherever  
his hand has lain there is  
a tiny purple blemish. Each part  
is a blossom under his touch  
to which the fibres of her being  
stem one by one, each to its end,  
until the whole field is a  
white desire, empty, a single stem,  
a cluster, flower by flower,  
a pious wish to whiteness gone over—  
or nothing.

## Great Mullen

One leaves his leaves at home  
being a mullen and sends up a lighthouse  
to peer from. I will have my way,  
yellow—A mast with a lantern, ten  
fifty, a hundred, smaller and smaller  
as they grow more—Liar, liar, liar!  
You come from her! I can smell djer-kiss  
on your clothes. Ha! you come to me,  
you—I am a point of dew on a grass-stem.  
Why are you sending heat down on me  
from your lantern?—You are coudung, a  
dead stick with the bark off. She is  
squirting on us both. She has had her  
hand on you!—well?—She has defiled  
ME.—Your leaves are dull, thick  
and hairy.—Every hair on my body will  
hold you off from me. You are a  
dungcake, birdlime on a fencerrail.—  
I love you, straight, yellow  
finger of God pointing to—her!  
Liar, broken weed, dungcake, you have—  
I am a cricket waving his antennae  
and you are high, grey and straight. Ha!

## ***Epitaph***

An old willow with hollow branches  
slowly swayed his few high bright tendrils  
and sang.

Love is a young green willow  
shimmering at the bare wood's edge.

## **Waiting**

When I am alone I am happy.  
The air is cool. The sky is  
flecked and splashed and wound  
with color. The crimson phalloi  
of the sassafras leaves  
hang crowded before me  
in shoals on the heavy branches.  
When I reach my doorstep  
I am greeted by  
the happy shrieks of my children  
and my heart sinks.  
I am crushed.

Are not my children as dear to me  
as falling leaves or  
must one become stupid  
to grow older?  
It seems much as if Sorrow  
had tripped up my heels.  
Let us see, let us see!  
What did I plan to say to her  
when it should happen to me  
as it has happened now?

## ***The Hunter***

In the flashes and black shadows  
of July  
the days, locked in each other's arms,  
seem still  
so that squirrels and colored birds  
go about at ease over  
the branches and through the air.

Where will a shoulder split or  
a forehead open and victory be?

Nowhere.  
Both sides grow older.

And you may be sure  
not one leaf will lift itself  
from the ground  
and become fast to a twig again.



## ***Arrival***

And yet one arrives somehow,  
finds himself loosening the hooks of  
her dress  
in a strange bedroom—  
feels the autumn  
dropping its silk and linen leaves  
about her ankles.  
The tawdry veined body emerges  
twisted upon itself  
like a winter wind . . . !

## ***To a Friend Concerning Several Ladies***

You know there is not much  
that I desire, a few chrysanthemums  
half lying on the grass, yellow  
and brown and white, the  
talk of a few people, the trees,  
an expanse of dried leaves perhaps  
with ditches among them.

But there comes  
between me and these things  
a letter  
or even a look—well placed,  
you understand,  
so that I am confused, twisted  
four ways and—left flat,  
unable to lift the food to  
my own mouth:  
Here is what they say: Come!  
and come! and come! And if  
I do not go I remain stale to  
myself and if I go—

I have watched  
the city from a distance at night  
and wondered why I wrote no poem.  
Come! yes,  
the city is ablaze for you  
and you stand and look at it.

And they are right. There is  
no good in the world except out of  
a woman and certain women alone  
for certain things. But what if  
I arrive like a turtle,

with my house on my back or  
a fish ogling from under water?  
It will not do. I must be  
steaming with love, colored  
like a flamingo. For what?  
To have legs and a silly head  
and to smell, pah! like a flamingo  
that soils its own feathers behind?  
Must I go home filled  
with a bad poem?  
And they say:  
Who can answer these things  
till he has tried? Your eyes  
are half closed, you are a child,  
oh, a sweet one, ready to play  
but I will make a man of you and  
with love on his shoulder—!

And in the marshes  
the crickets run  
on the sunny dike's top and  
make burrows there, the water  
reflects the reeds and the reeds  
move on their stalks and rattle drily.

## ***The Disputants***

Upon the table in their bowl!  
in violent disarray  
of yellow sprays, green spikes  
of leaves, red pointed petals  
and curled heads of blue  
and white among the litter  
of the forks and crumbs and plates  
the flowers remain composed.  
Coolly their colloquy continues  
above the coffee and loud talk  
grown frail as vaudeville.

## ***The Birds***

The world begins again!  
Not wholly insufflated  
the blackbirds in the rain  
upon the dead topbranches  
of the living tree,  
stuck fast to the low clouds,  
notate the dawn.  
Their shrill cries sound  
announcing appetite  
and drop among the bending roses  
and the dripping grass.

## ***Youth and Beauty***

I bought a dishmop—  
having no daughter—  
for they had twisted  
fine ribbons of shining copper  
about white twine  
and made a tousled head  
of it, fastened it  
upon a turned ash stick  
slender at the neck  
straight, tall—  
when tied upright  
on the brass wallbracket  
to be a light for me  
and naked  
as a girl should seem  
to her father.

## ***The Thinker***

My wife's new pink slippers  
have gay pom-poms.  
There is not a spot or a stain  
on their satin toes or their sides.  
All night they lie together  
under her bed's edge.  
Shivering I catch sight of them  
and smile, in the morning.  
Later I watch them  
descending the stair,  
hurrying through the doors  
and round the table,  
moving stiffly  
with a shake of their gay pom-poms!  
And I talk to them  
in my secret mind  
out of pure happiness.

## ***The Tulip Bed***

The May sun—whom  
all things imitate—  
that glues small leaves to  
the wooden trees  
shone from the sky  
through bluegauze clouds  
upon the ground.  
Under the leafy trees  
where the suburban streets  
lay crossed,  
with houses on each corner,  
tangled shadows had begun  
to join  
the roadway and the lawns.  
With excellent precision  
the tulip bed  
inside the iron fence  
upreared its gaudy  
yellow, white and red,  
rimmed round with grass,  
reposedly.

## ***Spouts***

In this world of  
as fine a pair of breasts  
as ever I saw  
the fountain in  
Madison Square  
spouts up of water  
a white tree  
that dies and lives  
as the rocking water  
in the basin  
turns from the stonerim  
back upon the jet  
and rising there  
reflectively drops down again.



## ***The Widow's Lament in Springtime***

Sorrow is my own yard  
where the new grass  
flames as it has flamed  
often before but not  
with the cold fire  
that closes round me this year.  
Thirtyfive years  
I lived with my husband.  
The plumbtree is white today  
with masses of flowers.  
Masses of flowers  
load the cherry branches  
and color some bushes  
yellow and some red  
but the grief in my heart  
is stronger than they  
for though they were my joy  
formerly, today I notice them  
and turned away forgetting.  
Today my son told me  
that in the meadows,  
at the edge of the heavy woods  
in the distance, he saw  
trees of white flowers.  
I feel that I would like  
to go there  
and fall into those flowers  
and sink into the marsh near them.

## ***The Nightingales***

My shoes as I lean  
unlacing them  
stand out upon  
flat worsted flowers.

Nimbly the shadows  
of my fingers play  
unlacing  
over shoes and flowers.

## **Blueflags**

I stopped the car  
to let the children down  
where the streets end  
in the sun  
at the marsh edge  
and the reeds begin  
and there are small houses  
facing the reeds  
and the blue mist  
in the distance  
with grapevine trellises  
with grape clusters  
small as strawberries  
on the vines  
and ditches  
running springwater  
that continue the gutters  
with willows over them.  
The reeds begin  
like water at a shore  
their pointed petals waving  
dark green and light.  
But blueflags are blossoming  
in the reeds  
which the children pluck  
chattering in the reeds  
high over their heads  
which they part  
with bare arms to appear  
with fists of flowers  
till in the air  
there comes the smell  
of calamus  
from wet, gummy stalks.

## ***Lighthearted William***

Lighthearted William twirled  
his November moustaches  
and, half dressed, looked  
from the bedroom window  
upon the spring weather.

Heigh-ya! sighed he gaily  
leaning out to see  
up and down the street  
where a heavy sunlight  
lay beyond some blue shadows.

Into the room he drew  
his head again and laughed  
to himself quietly  
twirling his green moustaches.

## ***The Lonely Street***

School is over. It is too hot  
to walk at ease. At ease  
in light frocks they walk the streets  
to while the time away.  
They have grown tall. They hold  
pink flames in their right hands.  
In white from head to foot,  
with sidelong, idle look—  
in yellow, floating stuff,  
black sash and stockings—  
touching their avid mouths  
with pink sugar on a stick—  
like a carnation each holds in her hand—  
they mount the lonely street.

## ***Portrait of the Author***

The birches are mad with green points  
the wood's edge is burning with their green,  
burning, seething—No, no, no.  
The birches are opening their leaves one  
by one. Their delicate leaves unfold cold  
and separate, one by one. Slender tassels  
hang swaying from the delicate branch tips—  
Oh, I cannot say it. There is no word.  
Black is split at once into flowers. In  
every bog and ditch, flares of  
small fire, white flowers!—Agh,  
the birches are mad, mad with their green.  
The world is gone, torn into shreds  
with this blessing. What have I left undone  
that I should have undertaken?

O my brother, you redfaced, living man  
ignorant, stupid whose feet are upon  
this same dirt that I touch—and eat.  
We are alone in this terror, alone,  
face to face on this road, you and I,  
wrapped by this flame!  
Let the polished plows stay idle,  
their gloss already on the black soil  
But that face of yours—!  
Answer me. I will clutch you. I  
will hug you, grip you. I will poke my face  
into your face and force you to see me.  
Take me in your arms, tell me the commonest  
thing that is in your mind to say,  
say anything. I will understand you—!  
It is the madness of the birch leaves opening  
cold, one by one.

My rooms will receive me. But my rooms  
are no longer sweet spaces where comfort  
is ready to wait on me with its crumbs.  
A darkness has brushed them. The mass  
of yellow tulips in the bowl is shrunk.  
Every familiar object is changed and dwarfed.  
I am shaken, broken against a might  
that splits comfort, blows apart  
my careful partitions, crushes my house  
and leaves me—with shrinking heart  
and startled, empty eyes—peering out  
into a cold world.

In the spring I would drink! In the spring  
I would be drunk and lie forgetting all things.  
Your face! Give me your face, Yang Kue Fei!  
your hands, your lips to drink!  
Give me your wrists to drink—  
I drag you, I am drowned in you, you  
overwhelm me! Drink!  
Save me! The shad bush is in the edge  
of the clearing. The yards in a fury  
of lilac blossoms are driving me mad with terror.  
Drink and lie forgetting the world.

And coldly the birch leaves are opening one by one.  
Coldly I observe them and wait for the end.  
And it ends.

## ***The Great Figure***

Among the rain  
and lights  
I saw the figure 5  
in gold  
on a red  
firetruck  
moving  
tense  
unheeded  
to gong clangs  
siren howls  
and wheels rumbling  
through the dark city.



***Paterson***

•

***The Flower***



## Paterson

Before the grass is out the people are out  
and bare twigs still whip the wind—  
when there is nothing, in the pause between  
snow and grass in the parks and at the street ends  
—Say it, no ideas but in things—  
nothing but the blank faces of the houses  
and cylindrical trees  
bent, forked by preconception and accident  
split, furrowed, creased, mottled, stained  
secret—into the body of the light—  
These are the ideas, savage and tender  
somewhat of the music, et cetera  
of Paterson, that great philosopher—

From above, higher than the spires, higher  
even than the office towers, from oozy fields  
abandoned to grey beds of dead grass  
black sumac, withered weed stalks  
mud and thickets cluttered with dead leaves—  
the river comes pouring in above the city  
and crashes from the edge of the gorge  
in a recoil of spray and rainbow mists—  
—Say it, no ideas but in things—  
and factories crystallized from its force,  
like ice from spray upon the chimney rocks

. . . . .

Say it! No ideas but in things. Mr.  
Paterson has gone away  
to rest and write. Inside the bus one sees  
his thoughts sitting and standing. His thoughts  
alight and scatter—

Who are these people (how complex  
this mathematic) among whom I see myself  
in the regularly ordered plateglass of  
his thoughts, glimmering before shoes and bicycles—  
They walk incommunicado, the  
equation is beyond solution, yet  
its sense is clear—that they may live  
his thought is listed in the Telephone  
Directory—

and there's young Alex Shorn  
whose dad the boot-black bought a house  
and painted it inside  
with seascapes of a pale green monochrome—  
the infant Dionysus springing from  
Apollo's arm—the floors oakgrained in  
Balkan fashion—Hermes' nose, the body  
of a gourmand, the lips of Cupid, the eyes  
the black eyes of Venus' sister—

But who! who are these people? It is  
his flesh making the traffic, cranking the car  
buying the meat—  
Defeated in achieving the solution they  
fall back among cheap pictures, furniture  
filled silk, cardboard shoes, bad dentistry  
windows that will not open, poisonous gin  
scurvy, toothache—

. . . . .

But never, in despair and anxiety  
forget to drive wit in, in till it  
discover that his thoughts are decorous and simple  
and never forget that though his thoughts are decorous  
and simple, the despair and anxiety

the grace and detail of  
a dynamo—

Divine thought! Jacob fell backwards off the press  
and broke his spine. What pathos, what mercy  
of nurses (who keep birthday books)  
and doctors who can't speak proper english—  
is here correctly on a spotless bed  
painless to the Nth power—the two legs  
perfect without movement or sensation

Twice a month Paterson receives letters  
from the Pope, his works are translated  
into French, the clerks in the post office  
ungum the rare stamps from his packages  
and steal them for their children's albums

So in his high decorum he is wise

. . . . .

What wind and sun of children stamping the snow  
stamping the snow and screaming drunkenly  
The actual, florid detail of cheap carpet  
amazingly upon the floor and paid for  
as no portrait ever was—Canary singing  
and geraniums in tin cans spreading their leaves  
reflecting red upon the frost—  
They are the divisions and imbalances  
of his whole concept, made small by pity  
and desire, they are—no ideas beside the facts—

## ***The Flower***

A petal, colorless and without form  
the oblong towers lie

beyond the low hill and northward the great  
bridge stanchions,

small in the distance, have appeared,  
pinkish and incomplete—

It is the city,  
approaching over the river. Nothing

of it is mine, but visibly  
for all that it is petal of a flower—my own.

It is a flower through which the wind  
combs the whitened grass and a black dog

with yellow legs stands eating from a  
garbage barrel. One petal goes eight blocks

past two churches and a brick school beyond  
the edge of the park where under trees

leafless now, women having nothing else to do  
sit in summer—to the small house

in which I happen to have been born. Or  
a heap of dirt, if you care

to say it, frozen and sunstreaked in  
the January sun, returning.

Then they hand you—they who wish to God  
you'd keep your fingers out of

their business—science or philosophy or  
anything else they can find to throw off

to distract you. But Madame Lenine  
is a benefactress when under her picture

in the papers she is quoted as saying:  
Children should be especially protected

from religion. Another petal  
reaches to San Diego, California where

a number of young men, New Yorkers most  
of them, are kicking up the dust.

A flower, at its heart (the stamens, pistil,  
etc.) is a naked woman, about 38, just

out of bed, worth looking at both for  
her body and her mind and what she has seen

and done. She it was put me straight  
about the city when I said, It

makes me ill to see them run up  
a new bridge like that in a few months

and I can't find time even to get  
a book written. They have the power,

that's all, she replied. That's what you all  
want. If you can't get it, acknowledge

at least what it is. And they're not  
going to give it to you. Quite right.

For years I've been tormented by  
that miracle, the buildings all lit up—

unable to say anything much to the point  
though it is the major sight

of this region. But foolish to rhapsodize over  
strings of lights, the blaze of a power

in which I have not the least part.  
Another petal reaches

into the past, to Puerto Rico  
when my mother was a child bathing in a small

river and splashing water up on  
the yucca leaves to see them roll back pearls.

The snow is hard on the pavements. This  
is no more a romance than an allegory.

I plan one thing—that I could press  
buttons to do the curing of or caring for

the sick that I do laboriously now by hand  
for cash, to have the time

when I am fresh, in the morning, when  
my mind is clear and burning—to write.



## ***Spring and All***



## *pring and All*

By the road to the contagious hospital  
under the surge of the blue  
mottled clouds driven from the  
northeast—a cold wind. Beyond, the  
waste of broad, muddy fields  
brown with dried weeds, standing and fallen

patches of standing water  
the scattering of tall trees

All along the road the reddish  
purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy  
stuff of bushes and small trees  
with dead, brown leaves under them  
leafless vines—

Lifeless in appearance, sluggish  
dazed spring approaches—

They enter the new world naked,  
cold, uncertain of all  
save that they enter. All about them  
the cold, familiar wind—

Now the grass, tomorrow  
the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf  
One by one objects are defined—  
It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf

But now the stark dignity of  
entrance—Still, the profound change  
has come upon them: rooted, they  
grip down and begin to awaken

## II

### ***The Pot of Flowers***

Pink confused with white  
flowers and flowers reversed  
take and spill the shaded flame  
darting it back  
into the lamp's horn

petals aslant darkened with mauve

red where in whorls  
petal lays its glow upon petal  
round flamegreen throats

petals radiant with transpiercing light  
contending  
                    above

the leaves  
reaching up their modest green  
from the pot's rim

and there, wholly dark, the pot  
gay with rough moss.

***The Farmer***

The farmer in deep thought  
is pacing through the rain  
among his blank fields, with  
hands in pockets,  
in his head  
the harvest already planted.  
A cold wind ruffles the water  
among the browned weeds.  
On all sides  
the world rolls coldly away:  
black orchards  
darkened by the March clouds—  
leaving room for thought.  
Down past the brushwood  
bristling by  
the rainsluced wagonroad  
looms the artist figure of  
the farmer—composing  
—antagonist

***Flight to the City***

The Easter stars are shining  
above lights that are flashing—  
coronal of the black—  
Nobody  
to say it—  
Nobody to say: pinholes

Thither I would carry her  
among the lights—

Burst it asunder  
break through to the fifty words  
necessary—

a crown for her head with  
castles upon it, skyscrapers  
filled with nut-chocolates—

dovetame winds—  
stars of tinsel

from the great end of a cornucopia  
of glass.

## V

Black winds from the north  
enter black hearts. Barred from  
seclusion in lilies they strike  
to destroy—

strident voices, heat  
quicken'd, built of waves

Hate is of the night and the day  
of flowers and rocks. Nothing  
is gained by saying the night breeds  
murder—It is the classical mistake

All that enters in another person  
all grass, all blackbirds flying  
all azalea trees in flower  
salt winds—

That is why boxing matches and  
Chinese poems are the same—That is why  
Hartley praises Miss Wirt

There is nothing in the twist  
of the wind but—dashes of cold rain

It is one with submarine vistas  
purple and black fish turning  
among undulant seaweed—

Black wind, I have poured my heart out  
to you until I am sick of it—

Now I run my hand over you feeling  
the play of your body—the quiver  
of its strength—

The grief of the bowmen of Shu  
moves nearer—There is  
an approach with difficulty from  
the dead—the winter casing of grief

How easy to slip  
into the old mode, how hard to  
cling firmly to the advance—



## VI

### ***To Have Done Nothing***

No that is not it  
nothing that I have done  
nothing  
I have done

is made up of  
nothing  
and the diphthong

ae

together with  
the first person  
singular  
indicative

of the auxiliary  
verb  
to have

everything  
I have done  
is the same

if to do  
is capable  
of an  
infinity of  
combinations

involving the  
moral  
physical  
and religious

codes

for everything  
and nothing  
are synonymous  
when

energy *in vacuo*  
has the power  
of confusion

which only to  
have done nothing  
can make  
perfect

**The Rose**

The rose is obsolete  
but each petal ends in  
an edge, the double facet  
cementing the grooved  
columns of air—The edge  
cuts without cutting  
meets—nothing—renews  
itself in metal or porcelain—

whither? It ends—

But if it ends  
the start is begun  
so that to engage roses  
becomes a geometry—

Sharper, neater, more cutting  
figured in majolica—  
the broken plate  
glazed with a rose

Somewhere the sense  
makes copper roses  
steel roses—

The rose carried weight of love  
but love is at an end—of roses  
It is at the edge of the  
petal that love waits

Crisp, worked to defeat  
laboredness—fragile  
plucked, moist, half-raised  
cold, precise, touching

What

The place between the petal's  
edge and the

From the petal's edge a line starts  
that being of steel  
infinitely fine, infinitely  
rigid penetrates  
the Milky Way  
without contact—lifting  
from it—neither hanging  
nor pushing—

The fragility of the flower  
unbruised  
penetrates space.

VIII

***At the Faucet of June***

The sunlight in a  
yellow plaque upon the  
varnished floor

is full of a song  
inflated to  
fifty pounds pressure

at the faucet of  
June that rings  
the triangle of the air

pulling at the  
anemones in  
Persephone's cow pasture—

When from among  
the steel rocks leaps  
J.P.M.

who enjoyed  
extraordinary privileges  
among virginity

to solve the core  
of whirling flywheels  
by cutting

the Gordian knot  
with a Veronese or  
perhaps a Rubens—

whose cars are about  
the finest on  
the market today—

And so it comes  
to motor cars—  
which is the son

leaving off the g  
of sunlight and grass—  
Impossible

to say, impossible  
to underestimate—  
wind, earthquakes in

Manchuria, a  
partridge  
from dry leaves.

**Young Love**

What about all this writing?

O "Kiki"

O Miss Margaret Jarvis

The backhandspring

I: clean

clean

clean: yes . . New York

Wrigley's, appendicitis, John Marin:  
skyscraper soup—

Either that or a bullet!

Once  
anything might have happened  
You lay relaxed on my knees—  
the starry night  
spread out warm and blind  
above the hospital—

Pah!

It is unclean  
which is not straight to the mark—

In my life the furniture eats me

the chairs, the floor  
the walls  
which heard your sobs

drank up my emotion—  
they which alone know everything

and snitched on us in the morning—

What to want?

Drunk we go forward surely  
Not I

beds, beds, beds  
elevators, fruit, night-tables  
breasts to see, white and blue—  
to hold in the hand, to nozzle

It is not onion soup  
Your sobs soaked through the walls  
breaking the hospital to pieces  
Everything  
—windows, chairs  
obscenely drunk, spinning—  
white, blue, orange  
—hot with our passion  
wild tears, desperate rejoinders  
my legs, turning slowly  
end over end in the air!

But what would you have?

All I said was:  
there, you see, it is broken  
stockings, shoes, hairpins  
your bed, I wrapped myself round you—

I watched.



You sobbed, you beat your pillow  
you tore your hair  
you dug your nails into your sides

I was your nightgown  
I watched'

Clean is he alone  
after whom stream  
the broken pieces of the city—  
flying apart at his approaches

but I merely  
caressed you curiously  
fifteen years ago and you still  
go about the city, they say  
patching up sick school children

## ***The Eyeglasses***

The universality of things  
draws me toward the candy  
with melon flowers that open

about the edge of refuse  
proclaiming without accent  
the quality of the farmer's

shoulders and his daughter's  
accidental skin, so sweet  
with clover and the small

yellow cinquefoil in the  
parched places. It is  
this that engages the favorable

distortion of eyeglasses  
that see everything and remain  
related to mathematics—

in the most practical frame of  
brown celluloid made to  
represent tortoiseshell—

A letter from the man who  
wants to start a new magazine  
made of linen

and he owns a typewriter—  
July 1, 1922  
All this is for eyeglasses

to discover. But  
they lie there with the gold  
earpieces folded down

tranquilly Titicaca—

***The Right of Way***

In passing with my mind  
on nothing in the world

but the right of way  
I enjoy on the road by

virtue of the law—  
I saw

an elderly man who  
smiled and looked away

to the north past a house—  
a woman in blue

who was laughing and  
leaning forward to look up

into the man's half  
averted face

and a boy of eight who was  
looking at the middle of

the man's belly  
at a watchchain—

The supreme importance  
of this nameless spectacle

sped me by them  
without a word—

Why bother where I went?  
for I went spinning on the

four wheels of my car  
along the wet road until

I saw a girl with one leg  
over the rail of a balcony

**Composition**

The red paper box  
hinged with cloth

is lined  
inside and out  
with imitation  
leather

It is the sun  
the table  
with dinner  
on it for  
these are the same

Its twainch trays  
have engineers  
that convey glue  
to airplanes

or for old ladies  
that darn socks  
paper clips  
and red elastics—

What is the end  
to insects  
that suck gummed  
labels?

for this is eternity  
through its

dial we discover  
transparent tissue  
on a spool

But the stars  
are round  
cardboard  
with a tin edge

and a ring  
to fasten them  
to a trunk  
for the vacation—

***The Agonized Spires***

Crustaceous  
wedge  
of sweaty kitchens  
on rock  
overtopping  
thrusts of the sea

Waves of steel  
from swarming backstreets  
shell  
of coral  
inventing  
electricity—

Lights  
speckle  
El Greco  
lakes  
in renaissance  
twilight  
with triphammers

which pulverize  
nitrogen  
of old pastures  
to dodge  
motorcars  
with arms and legs—

The aggregate  
is untamed



encapsulating  
irritants  
but  
of agonized spires  
knits  
peace

where bridge stanchions  
rest  
certainly  
piercing  
left ventricles  
with long  
sunburnt fingers

## XIV

### *Death the Barber*

Of death  
the barber  
the barber  
talked to me

cutting my  
life with  
sleep to trim  
my hair—

It's just  
a moment  
he said, we die  
every night—

And of  
the newest  
ways to grow  
hair on

bald death—  
I told him  
of the quartz  
lamp

and of old men  
with third  
sets of teeth  
to the cue

of an old man  
who said  
at the door—  
Sunshine today!

for which  
death shaves  
him twice  
a week

***Light Becomes Darkness***

The decay of cathedrals  
is efflorescent  
through the phenomenal  
growth of movie houses

whose catholicity is  
progress since  
destruction and creation  
are simultaneous

without sacrifice  
of even the smallest  
detail even to the  
volcanic organ whose

woe is translatable  
to joy if light becomes  
darkness and darkness  
light, as it will—

But schism which seems  
adamant is diverted  
from the perpendicular  
by simply rotating the object

cleaving away the root of  
disaster which it  
seemed to foster. Thus  
the movies are a moral force

Nightly the crowds  
with the closeness and

universality of sand  
witness the selfpittle

which used to be drowned  
in incense and intoned  
over by the supple-jointed  
imagination of inoffensiveness

backed by biblical  
rigidity made into passion plays  
upon the altar to  
attract the dynamic mob

whose female relative  
sweeping grass Tolstoi  
saw injected into  
the Russian nobility.

***To an Old Jaundiced Woman***

O tongue  
licking  
the sore on  
her netherlip

O toppled belly

O passionate cotton  
stuck with  
matted hair

elsian slobber  
upon  
the folded handkerchief

I can't die

—moaned the old  
jaundiced woman  
rolling her  
saffron eyeballs

I can't die  
I can't die

***Shoot it Jimmy!***

Our orchestra  
is the cat's nuts—

Banjo jazz  
with a nickelplated

amplifier to  
soothe

the savage beast—  
Get the rhythm

That sheet stuff  
's a lot a cheese.

Man  
gimme the key

and lemme loose—  
I make 'em crazy

with my harmonies—  
Shoot it Jimmy

Nobody  
Nobody else

but me—  
They can't copy it

## XVIII

### *To Elsie*

The pure products of America  
go crazy—  
mountain folk from Kentucky

or the ribbed north end of  
Jersey  
with its isolate lakes and

valleys, its deaf-mutes, thieves  
old names  
and promiscuity between

devil-may-care men who have taken  
to railroading  
out of sheer lust of adventure—

and young slatterns, bathed  
in filth  
from Monday to Saturday

to be tricked out that night  
with gauds  
from imaginations which have no

peasant traditions to give them  
character  
but flutter and flaunt

sheer rags—succumbing without  
emotion  
save numbed terror



under some hedge of choke-cherry  
or viburnum—  
which they cannot express—

Unless it be that marriage  
perhaps  
with a dash of Indian blood

will throw up a girl so desolate  
so hemmed round  
with disease or murder

that she'll be rescued by an  
agent—  
reared by the state and

sent out at fifteen to work in  
some hard-pressed  
house in the suburbs—

some doctor's family, some Elsie—  
voluptuous water  
expressing with broken

brain the truth about us—  
her great  
ungainly hips and flopping breasts

addressed to cheap  
jewelry  
and rich young men with fine eyes

as if the earth under our feet  
were  
an excrement of some sky

and we degraded prisoners  
destined  
to hunger until we eat filth

while the imagination strains  
after deer  
going by fields of goldenrod in

the stifling heat of September  
Somehow  
it seems to destroy us

It is only in isolate flecks that  
something  
is given off

No one  
to witness  
and adjust, no one to drive the car

## ***Horned Purple***

This is the time of year  
when boys fifteen and seventeen  
wear two horned lilac blossoms  
in their caps—or over one ear

What is it that does this?

It is a certain sort—  
drivers for grocers or taxidivers  
white and colored—

fellows that let their hair grow long  
in a curve over one eye—

Horned purple

Dirty satyrs, it is  
vulgarity raised to the last power

They have stolen them  
broken the bushes apart  
with a curse for the owner—

Lilacs—

They stand in the doorways  
on the business streets with a sneer  
on their faces

adorned with blossoms

Out of their sweet heads  
dark kisses—rough faces

**The Sea**

The sea that encloses her young body  
ula lu la lu  
is the sea of many arms—

The blazing secrecy of noon is undone  
and and and  
the broken sand is the sound of love—

The flesh is firm that turns in the sea  
O la la  
the sea that is cold with dead men's tears—

Deeply the wooing that penetrated  
to the edge of the sea  
returns in the plash of the waves—

a wink over the shoulder  
large as the ocean—  
with wave following wave to the edge

coom barroom—

It is the cold of the sea  
broken upon the sand by the force  
of the moon—

In the sea the young flesh playing  
floats with the cries of far off men  
who rise in the sea

with green arms  
to homage again the fields over there  
where the night is deep—

la lu la lu  
but lips too few  
assume the new—marruu

Underneath the sea where it is dark  
there is no edge  
so two—

XXI

***The Red Wheelbarrow***

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens.

XXII

***Quietness***

one day in Paradise  
a Gypsy

smiled  
to see the blandness

of the leaves—  
so many

so lascivious  
and still

**Rigamarole**

The veritable night  
of wires and stars

the moon is in  
the oak tree's crotch

and sleepers in  
the windows cough

athwart the round  
and pointed leaves

and insects sting  
while on the grass

the whitish moonlight  
tearfully

assumes the attitudes  
of afternoon—

But it is real  
where peaches hang

recalling death's  
long-promised symphony

whose tuneful wood  
and stringish undergrowth



are ghosts existing  
without being

save to come with juice  
and pulp to assuage

the hungers which  
the night reveals

so that now at last  
the truth's aglow

with devilish peace  
forestalling day

which dawns tomorrow  
with dreadful reds

the heart to predicate  
with mists that loved

the ocean and the fields—  
Thus moonlight

is the perfect  
human touch.

***The Avenue of Poplars***

The leaves embrace  
in the trees

it is a wordless  
world

without personality  
I do not

seek a path  
I am still with

Gypsy lips pressed  
to my own—

It is the kiss  
of leaves

without being  
poison ivy

or nettle, the kiss  
of oak leaves—

He who has kissed  
a leaf

need look no further—  
I ascend

through  
a canopy of leaves

and at the same time  
I descend

for I do nothing  
unusual—

I ride in my car  
I think about

prehistoric caves  
in the Pyrenees—

the cave of  
*Les Trois Frères*

***Rapid Transit***

Somebody dies every four minutes  
in New York State—

To hell with you and your poetry—  
You will rot and be blown  
through the next solar system  
with the rest of the gases—

What the hell do you know about it?

**AXIOMS**

Don't get killed

Careful Crossing Campaign  
Cross Crossings Cautiously

THE HORSES	black
	&
PRANCED	white

Outings in New York City

Ho for the open country

Don't stay shut up in hot rooms  
Go to one of the Great Parks  
Pelham Bay for example

It's on Long Island Sound  
with bathing, boating  
tennis, baseball, golf, etc.

Acres and acres of green grass  
wonderful shade trees, rippling brooks

Take the Pelham Bay Park Branch  
of the Lexington Ave. (East Side)  
Line and you are there in a few  
minutes

Interborough Rapid Transit Co.

***At the Ball Game***

The crowd at the ball game  
is moved uniformly

by a spirit of uselessness  
which delights them—

all the exciting detail  
of the chase

and the escape, the error  
the flash of genius—

all to no end save beauty  
the eternal—

So in detail they, the crowd,  
are beautiful

for this  
to be warned against

saluted and defied—  
It is alive, venomous

it smiles grimly  
its words cut—

The flashy female with her  
mother, gets it—

The Jew gets it straight—it  
is deadly, terrifying—

It is the Inquisition, the  
Revolution

It is beauty itself  
that lives

day by day in them  
idly—

This is  
the power of their faces

It is summer, it is the solstice  
the crowd is

cheering, the crowd is laughing  
in detail

permanently, seriously  
without thought

***The Hermaphroditic Telephones***

Warm rains  
wash away winter's  
hermaphroditic telephones

whose demonic bells  
piercing the torpid  
ground

have filled with circular  
purple and green  
and blue anemonies

the radiant nothing  
of crystalline  
spring.



XXVIII

***The Wildflower***

Black eyed susan  
rich orange  
round the purple core

the white daisy  
is not enough

Crowds are white  
as farmers  
who live poorly

But you  
are rich  
in savagery—

Arab  
Indian  
dark woman.



## ***Struggle of Wings***



## **uggle of Wings**

Roundclouds occluding patches of the  
sky rival steam bluntly towering,  
slowspinning billows which rival  
the resting snow, which rivals the sun

beaten out upon it, flashing  
to a struggle (of wings) which  
fills the still air—still  
but cold—yet burning . . .

It is the snow risen upon itself, it is  
winter pressed breast to breast  
with its own whiteness, transparent  
yet visible:

Together, with their pigeon's heads whose  
stupid eyes deceive no one—  
they hold up between them something  
which wants to fall to the ground . . .

And there's the river with thin ice upon it  
fanning out half over the black  
water, the free middlewater racing under its  
ripples that move crosswise on the stream

But the wings and bodies of the pigeonlike  
creatures keep fluttering, turning together  
hiding that which is between them. It seems  
to rest not in their claws but upon their breasts—

It is a baby!  
Now it is very clear (\*) they're keeping the child  
(naked in the air) warm and safe between them.  
The eyes of the birds are fixed in

a bestial ecstasy. They strive together panting.  
It is an antithesis of logic, very  
theoretical. To his face the baby claps  
the bearded face of Socrates . . .

Ho, ho! he's dropped it. It was a mask.  
Now indeed the encounter throws aside all dissim-  
ulation. The false birdheads drop back, arms  
spring from the winged edges, all the parts

of two women become distinct, the anatomy  
familiar and complete to the smallest detail:  
A meaning plainly antipoetical . . . and  
. . . all there is is won

( . . . . .

It is Poesy, born of a man and two women  
Exit No. 4, the string from the windowshade  
has a noose at the bottom, a noose? or  
a ring—bound with a white cord, knotted  
around the circumference in a design—  
And all there is is won

And it is Innes on the meadows and fruit is  
yellow ripening in windows every minute  
growing brighter in the bulblight by the  
cabbages and spuds—  
And all there is is won

What are black 4 a.m.'s after all but black  
4 a.m.'s like anything else: a tree  
a fork, a leaf, a pane of glass—?  
And all there is is won

A relic of old decency, a "very personal friend"  
And all there is is won

(Envoi)

Pic, your crows feed at your window sill  
asso, try and get near mine . . .

And all there is is won  
( . . . . . )

All

up and down the Rio Grand the sand is sand  
on every hand (Grand chorus and finale)  
( . . . . . )

Out of such drab trash as this  
by a metamorphosis  
bright as wallpaper or crayon  
or where the sun casts ray on ray on  
flowers in a dish, you shall weave  
for Poesy a gaudy sleeve  
a scarf, a cap and find him gloves  
whiter than the backs of doves

. . . .

Clothe him

richly, those who loathe him  
will besmirch him fast enough.  
A surcease to sombre stuff—  
black's black, black's one thing  
but he's not a blackbird. Bring  
something else for him to wear.  
See! he's young he has black hair!  
Very well then, a red vest . . .





## ***The Descent of Winter***



## ***The Descent of Winter***

9/29

My bed is narrow  
in a small room  
at sea

The numbers are on  
the wall  
Arabic I

Berth No. 2  
was empty above me  
the steward

took it apart  
and removed  
it

only the number  
remains

• 2 •

on an oval disc  
of celluloid  
tacked

to the white-enameled  
woodwork  
with

two bright nails  
like stars  
beside

the moon

9/30

There are no perfect waves—  
Your writings are a sea  
full of misspellings and  
faulty sentences. Level. Troubled

A center distant from the land  
touched by the wings  
of nearly silent birds  
that never seem to rest—

This is the sadness of the sea—  
waves like words, all broken—  
a sameness of lifting and falling mood.

I lean watching the detail  
of brittle crest, the delicate  
imperfect foam, yellow weed  
one piece like another—

There is no hope—if not a coral  
island slowly forming  
to wait for birds to drop  
the seeds will make it habitable

10/9

and there's a little blackboy  
in a doorway  
scratching his wrists

The cap on his head  
is red and blue  
with a broad peak to it

and his mouth  
is open, his tongue  
between his teeth—

10/10

Monday  
the canna flaunts  
its crimson head

crimson lying folded  
crisply down upon

the invisible

darkly crimson heart  
of this poor yard

the grass is long

October tenth

1927

10/21

In the dead weeds a rubbish heap  
afire: the orange flames  
stream horizontal, windblown  
they parallel the ground

waving up and down  
the flamepoints alternating  
the body streaked with loops  
and purple stains while  
the pale smoke, above  
steadily continues eastward—

What chance have the old?  
There are no duties for them  
no places where they may sit  
their knowledge is laughed at  
they cannot see, they cannot hear.  
A small bundle on the shoulders  
weighs them down  
one hand is put back under it  
to hold it steady.  
Their feet hurt, they are weak  
they should not have to suffer  
as younger people must and do  
there should be a truce for them

10/22

that brilliant field  
of rainwet orange  
blanketed

by the red grass  
and oilgreen bayberry

the last yarrow  
on the gutter  
white by the sandy  
rainwater

and a white birch  
with yellow leaves  
and few  
and loosely hung

and a young dog  
jumped out  
of the old barrel

10/28

On hot days  
the sewing machine  
whirling

in the next room  
in the kitchen

and men at the bar  
talking of the strike  
and cash

10/28

in this strong light  
the leafless beechtree  
shines like a cloud

it seems to glow  
of itself  
with a soft stript light  
of love  
over the brittle  
grass

But there are  
on second look  
a few yellow leaves  
still shaking

far apart

just one here one there  
trembling vividly

10/29

The justice of poverty  
its shame its dirt  
are one with the meanness  
of love

its organ its tarpaulin  
the green birds  
the fat sleepy horse  
the old men

the grinder sourfaced  
hat over eyes  
the beggar smiling all open  
the lantern out

and the popular tunes—  
sold to the least bidder  
for a nickel  
two cents or

nothing at all or even  
against the desire  
forced on us



10/30

To freight cars in the air  
all the slow  
    clank, clank  
    clank, clank  
moving above the treetops  
the  
    wha, wha  
of the hoarse whistle

    pah,   pah,   pah  
    pah, pah, pah, pah, pah  
    piece and piece  
    piece and piece  
moving still trippingly  
through the morningmist

long after the engine  
has fought by  
            and disappeared  
in silence  
                    to the left

11/1

The moon, the dried weeds  
and the Pleiades—

Seven feet tall  
the dark, dried weedstalks  
make a part of the night  
a red lace  
on the blue milky sky

Write—  
by a small lamp

the Pleiades are almost  
nameless  
and the moon is tilted  
and halfgone

And in runningpants and  
with ecstatic, aesthetic faces  
on the illumined  
signboard are leaping  
over printed hurdles and  
“¼ of their energy comes from bread”

two  
gigantic highschool boys  
ten feet tall

1 1/2

Dahlias—

What a red  
and yellow and white  
mirror to the sun, round  
and petaled  
is this she holds?  
with a red face  
all in black  
and grey hair  
sticking out  
from under the bonnet brim  
Is this Washington Avenue Mr. please  
or do I have to  
cross the tracks?

A MORNING IMAGINATION OF RUSSIA

The earth and the sky were very close  
 When the sun rose it rose in his heart  
 It bathed the red cold world of  
 the dawn so that the chill was his own  
 The mists were sleep and sleep began  
 to fade from his eyes, below him in the  
 garden a few flowers were lying forward  
 on the intense green grass where  
 in the opalescent shadows oak leaves  
 were pressed hard down upon it in patches  
 by the night rain. There were no cities  
 between him and his desires  
 his hatreds and his loves were without walls  
 without rooms, without elevators  
 without files, delays of veiled murderers  
 muffled thieves, the tailings of  
 tedious, dead pavements, the walls  
 against desire save only for him who can pay  
 high, there were no cities—he was  
 without money—

Cities had faded richly  
 into foreign countries, stolen from Russia—  
 the richness of her cities—

Scattered wealth was close to his heart  
 he felt it uncertainly beating at  
 that moment in his wrists, scattered  
 wealth—but there was not much at hand

Cities are full of light, fine clothes  
 delicacies for the table, variety,  
 novelty—fashion: all spent for this.

Never to be like that again:  
the frame that was. It tickled his  
imagination. But it passed in a rising calm

Tan dar a dei; Tan dar a dei!

He was singing. Two miserable peasants  
very lazy and foolish  
seemed to have walked out from his own  
feet and were walking away with wooden rakes  
under the six nearly bare poplars, up the hill

There go my feet.

He stood still in the window forgetting  
to shave—

The very old past was refound  
redirected. It had wandered into himself  
The world was himself, these were  
his own eyes that were seeing, his own mind  
that was straining to comprehend, his own  
hands that would be touching other hands  
They were his own!  
His own, feeble, uncertain. He would go  
out to pick herbs, he graduate of  
the old university. He would go out  
and ask that old woman, in the little  
village by the lake, to show him wild  
ginger. He himself would not know the plant.

A horse was stepping up the dirt road  
under his window

He decided not to shave. Like those two  
that he knew now, as he had never

known them formerly. A city, fashion  
had been between—

Nothing between now.

He would go to the soviet unshaven. This  
was the day—and listen. Listen. That  
was all he did, listen to them, weigh  
for them. He was turning into  
a pair of scales, the scales in the  
zodiac.

But closer, he was himself  
the scales. The local soviet. They could  
weigh. If it was not too late. He felt  
uncertain many days. But all were uncertain  
together and he must weigh for them out  
of himself.

He took a small pair of scissors  
from the shelf and clipped his nails  
carefully. He himself served the fire.

We have cut out the cancer but  
who knows? perhaps the patient will die  
the patient is anybody, anything  
worthless that I desire, my hands  
to have it—instead of the feeling  
that there is a piece of glazed paper  
between me and the paper—invisible  
but tough running through the legal  
processes of possession—a city, that  
we could possess—

It's in art, it's in  
the French school.

What we lacked was  
everything. It is the middle of  
everything. Not to have.

We have little now but  
we have that. We are convalescents. Very  
feeble. Our hands shake. We need a  
transfusion. No one will give it to us,  
they are afraid of infection. I do not  
blame them. We have paid heavily. But we  
have gotten—touch. The eyes and the ears  
down on it. Close.

11/7

We must listen. Before  
she died she told them—  
I always liked to be well dressed  
I wanted to look nice—

So she asked them to dress  
her well. They curled her hair . . .

Now she fought  
She didn't want to go  
She didn't want to!

11/8

O river of my heart polluted  
and defamed I have compared you  
to that other lying in  
the red November grass

beginning to be cleaned now  
from factory pollution

Though at night a watchman  
must still prow! lest some paid hand  
open the waste sluices—

That river will be clean  
before ever you will be

11/10

The shell flowers  
the wax grapes and peaches  
the fancy oak or mahogany tables  
the highbacked baronial chairs

Or the girls' legs  
agile stanchions  
the breasts  
the pinheads—

—Wore my bathing suit  
wet  
four hours after sundown.  
That's how. Yea?  
Easy to get  
hard to get rid of.

Then unexpectedly  
a small house with a soaring oak  
leafless above it

Someone should summarize these things  
in the interest of local

government or how  
a spotted dog goes up a gutter—

and in chalk crudely  
upon the railroad bridge support  
a woman rampant  
brandishing two rolling pins

11/20

Even idiots grow old  
    in a cap with a peak  
over his right ear  
    cross-eyed  
shamble-footed  
    minding the three goats  
behind the firehouse  
    his face is deeper lined  
than last year  
    and the rain comes down  
in gusts suddenly

11/22

and hunters still return  
even through the city  
with their guns slung  
openly from the shoulder  
emptyhanded howbeit  
for the most part  
    but aloof  
as if from and truly from  
another older world



11/28

I make really very little money.  
What of it?  
I prefer the grass with the rain on it  
the short grass before my headlights  
when I am turning the car—  
a degenerate trait, no doubt.  
It would ruin England.

12/15

What an image in the face of Almighty God is she  
her hands in her slicker pockets, head bowed,  
Tam pulled down, flat-backed, lanky-legged,  
loose feet kicking the pebbles as she goes



## ***Impromptu: The Suckers***



## ***Impromptu: The Suckers***

Take it out in vile whisky, take it out  
in lifting your skirts to show your silken  
crotches; it is this that is intended.  
You are it. Your pleas will always be denied.  
You too will always go up with the two guys,  
scapegoats to save the Republic and  
especially the State of Massachusetts. The  
Governor says so and you ain't supposed  
to ask for details—

Your case has been reviewed by high-minded  
and unprejudiced observers (like hell  
they were!) the president of a great  
university, the president of a noteworthy  
technical school and a judge too old to sit  
on the bench, men already rewarded for  
their services to pedagogy and the enforcement  
of arbitrary statutes. In other words  
pimps to tradition—

Why in hell didn't they choose some other  
kind of "unprejudiced adviser" for their  
death council? instead of sticking to that  
autocratic strain of Boston backwash, except  
that the council was far from unprejudiced  
but the product of a rejected, discredited  
class long since outgrown except for use in  
courts and school, and that they  
wanted it so—

Why didn't they choose at least one decent  
Jew or some fair-minded Negro or anybody  
but such a triumvirate of inversion, the

New England aristocracy, bent on working off a grudge against you, Americans, you are the suckers, you are the ones who will be going up on the eleventh to get the current shot into you, for the glory of the state and the perpetuation of abstract justice—

And all this in the face of the facts: that the man who swore, and deceived the jury wilfully by so doing, that the bullets found in the bodies of the deceased could be identified as having been fired from the pistol of one of the accused—later acknowledged that he could not so identify them; that the jurors now seven years after the crime do not remember the details and have wanted to forget them; that the prosecution has never succeeded in apprehending the accomplices nor in connecting the prisoners with any of the loot stolen—

The case is perfect against you, all the documents say so—in spite of the fact that it is reasonably certain that you were not at the scene of the crime, shown, quite as convincingly as the accusing facts in the court evidence, by better reasoning to have been committed by someone else with whom the loot can be connected and among whom the accomplices can be found—

It's no use, you are Americans, just the dregs. It's all you deserve. You've got the cash, what the hell do you care? You've got nothing to lose. You are inheritors of a great tradition. My country right or wrong!

You do what you're told to do. You don't answer back the way Tommy Jeff did or Ben Frank or Georgie Washing. I'll say you don't. You're civilized. You let your betters tell you where you get off. Go ahead—

But after all, the thing that swung heaviest against you was that you were scared when they copped you. Explain that you nature's nobleman! For you know that every American is innocent and at peace in his own heart. He hasn't a damned thing to be afraid of. He knows the government is for him. Why, when a cop steps up and grabs you at night you just laugh and think it's a hell of a good joke—

This is what was intended from the first. So take it out in your rotten whisky and silk underwear. That's what you get out of it. But put it down in your memory that this is the kind of stuff that they can't get away with. It is there and it's loaded. No one can understand what makes the present age what it is. They are mystified by certain insistences.





***Collected Poems 1934***



## ***All the Fancy Things***

music and painting and all that  
That's all they thought of  
in Puerto Rico in the old Spanish  
days when she was a girl

So that now  
she doesn't know what to do

with herself alone  
and growing old up here—

Green is green  
but the tag ends  
of older things, *ma chère*

must withstand rebuffs  
from that which returns  
to the beginnings—

Or what? a  
clean air, high up, unoffended  
by gross odors

## Hemmed-in Males

The saloon is gone up the creek  
with the black sand round its  
mouth, it went floating like

a backhouse on the Mississippi in  
flood time but it went up  
the creek into Limbo from whence

only empty bottles ever return  
and that's where George is  
He's gone upstream to ask 'em

to let him in at the hole  
in the wall where the W.C.T.U.  
sits knitting elastic stockings

for varicose veins. Poor George  
he's got a job now as janitor  
in Lincoln School but the saloon

is gone forever with pictures  
of Sullivan and Kilrain on  
the walls and Pop Anson holding

a bat. Poor George, they've cut  
out his pituitary gland and his  
*vas deferens* is in the spittoon—

You can laugh at him without his  
organs but that's the way with  
a river when it wants to

drown you, it sucks you in and  
you feel the old saloon sinking  
under you and you say good-by

just as George did, good-by poetry  
the black sand's got me, the old  
days are over, there's no place

any more for me to go now  
except home—

## Brilliant Sad Sun

Lee's  
Lunch

Spaghetti  
a Specialty

Oysters  
Clams

and raw Winter's done  
to a turn—Restaurant: Spring!  
Ah, Madam, what good are your thoughts

romantic but true  
beside this gaiety of the sun  
and that huge appetite?

Look!  
from a glass pitcher she serves  
clear water to the white chickens.

What are your memories  
beside that purity?  
The empty pitcher dangling

from her grip  
her coarse voice croaks  
*Bon jor'*

And Patti, on her first concert tour  
sang at your house in Mayaguez  
and your brother was there

What beauty  
beside your sadness—and  
what sorrow

## ***It Is a Living Coral***

a trouble

archaically fettered  
to produce

*E Pluribus Unum* an  
island

in the sea a Capitol  
surmounted

by Armed Liberty—  
painting

sculpture straddled by  
a dome

eight million pounds  
in weight

iron plates constructed  
to expand

and contract with  
variations

of temperature  
the folding

and unfolding of a lily.  
And Congress

authorized and the  
Commission

was entrusted was  
entrusted!

a sculptured group  
Mars

in Roman mail placing  
a wreath

of laurel on the brow  
of Washington

Commerce Minerva  
Thomas

Jefferson John Hancock  
at

the table Mrs. Motte  
presenting

Indian burning arrows  
to Generals

Marion and Lee to fire  
her mansion

and dislodge the British—  
this scaleless

jumble is superb

and accurate in its  
expression

of the thing they  
would destroy—



Baptism of Pocahontas

with a little card  
hanging

under it to tell  
the persons

in the picture.

It climbs

it runs, it is Geo.  
Shoup

of Idaho it wears  
a beard

it fetches naked  
Indian

women from a river  
Trumbull

Varnum Henderson  
Frances

Willard's corset is  
absurd—

Banks White Columbus  
stretched

in bed men felling trees

The Hon. Michael  
C. Kerr

onetime Speaker of  
the House

of Representatives  
Perry

in a rowboat on Lake  
Erie

changing ships the  
dead

among the wreckage  
sickly green

**To**

a child (a boy) bouncing  
a ball ( a blue ball)—

He bounces it (a toy racket  
in his hand) and runs

and catches it (with his  
left hand) six floors

straight down—  
which is the old back yard

## ***This Florida: 1924***

of which I am the sand—  
one of the sands—in which  
the turtle eggs are baking—

The people are running away  
toward me, Hibiscus,  
where I lie, sad,

by the stern  
slaying palm trees—  
(They're so much better

at a distance than they are  
up close. Cocoanuts  
aren't they?

or Royal palms?  
They are so tall the wind  
rips them to shreds)

—this frightened  
frantic pilgrimage has left  
my bungalows up here

lonely as the Lido in April  
"Florida the Flowery!"  
Well,

it's a kind of borrowed  
pleasure after all (as at the movies)  
to see them

tearing off to escape it  
this winter  
this winter that I feel

So—  
already ten o'clock?  
*Vorwärts!*

e-e i-i o-o u-u a-a  
Shall I write it in iambs?  
Cottages in a row

all radioed and showerbathed?  
But I am sick of rime—  
The whole damned town

is riming up one street  
and down another, yet there is  
the rime of her white teeth

the rime of glasses  
at my plate, the ripple time  
the rime her fingers make—

And we thought to escape rime  
by imitation of the senseless  
unarrangement of wild things—

the stupidest rime of all—  
Rather, Hibiscus,  
let me examine

those varying shades  
of orange, clear as an electric  
bulb on fire

or powdery with sediment—  
matt, the shades and textures  
of a Cubist picture

the charm  
of fish by Hartley, orange  
of ale and lilies

orange of topaz, orange of red hair  
orange of curaçoa  
orange of the Tiber

turbid, orange of the bottom  
rocks in Maine rivers  
orange of mushrooms

of Cepes that Marshal loved  
to cook in copper  
pans, orange of the sun—

I shall do my pees, instead—  
boiling them in test tubes  
holding them to the light

dropping in the acid—  
Peggy has a little albumen  
in hers—

## Young Sycamore

I must tell you  
this young tree  
whose round and firm trunk  
between the wet

pavement and the gutter  
(where water  
is trickling) rises  
bodily

into the air with  
one undulant  
thrust half its height—  
and then

dividing and waning  
sending out  
young branches on  
all sides—

hung with cocoons  
it thins  
till nothing is left of it  
but two

eccentric knotted  
twigs  
bending forward  
hornlike at the top

## ***The Cod Head***

Miscellaneous weed  
strands, stems, debris—  
firmament

to fishes—  
where the yellow feet  
of gulls dabble

oars whip  
ships churn to bubbles—  
at night wildly

agitate phosphores-  
cent midges—but by day  
flaccid

moons in whose  
discs sometimes a red cross  
lives—four

fathom—the bottom skids  
a mottle of green  
sands backward—

amorphous waver-  
ing rocks—three fathom  
the vitreous

body through which—  
small scudding fish deep  
down—and

now a lulling lift  
and fall—  
red stars—a severed cod—

head between two  
green stones—lifting  
falling



## ***New England***

is a condition—  
of bedrooms whose electricity

is brickish or made into  
T beams—They dangle them

on wire cables to the tops  
of Woolworth buildings

five and ten cents worth—  
There they have bolted them

into place at masculine risk—  
Or a boy with a rose under

the lintel of his cap  
standing to have his picture

taken on the butt of a girder  
with the city a mile down—

captured, lonely cock atop  
iron girders wears rosepetal

smile—a thought of Indians  
on chestnut branches

to end “walking on the air”

## The Bull

It is in captivity—  
ringed, haltered, chained  
to a drag  
the bull is godlike

Unlike the cows  
he lives alone, nozzles  
the sweet grass gingerly  
to pass the time away

He kneels, lies down  
and stretching out  
a foreleg licks himself  
about the hoof

then stays  
with half-closed eyes,  
Olympian commentary on  
the bright passage of days.

—The round sun  
smooth his lacquer  
through  
the glossy pinetrees

his substance hard  
as ivory or glass—  
through which the wind  
yet plays—  
milkless

he nods  
the hair between his horns  
and eyes matted  
with hyacinthine curls

## ***In the 'Sconset Bus***

Upon the fallen  
cheek

a gauzy down—  
And on

the nape  
—indecently

a mat  
of yellow hair

stuck with  
celluloid

pins  
not quite

matching it  
—that's

two shades  
darker

at the roots  
Hanging

from the ears  
the hooks

piercing the  
flesh—

gold and semi-  
precious

stones—  
And in her

lap the dog  
(Youth)

resting  
his head on

the ample  
shoulder his

bright  
mouth agape

pants restlessly  
backward

## Poem

As the cat  
climbed over  
the top of

the jamcloset  
first the right  
forefoot

carefully  
then the hind  
stepped down

into the pit of  
the empty  
flowerpot

## ***Sluggishly***

or with a rush  
the river flows—

and none  
is unaffected—

Think:  
the clear stream

boiling at  
the boat's wake

or—  
a stench  
your choice is—

And respond?

                  crapulous  
—having eaten

fouling  
the water grass

## ***The Jungle***

It is not the still weight  
of the trees, the  
breathless interior of the wood,  
tangled with wrist-thick

vines, the flies, reptiles,  
the forever fearful monkeys  
screaming and running  
in the branches—

but  
a girl waiting  
shy, brown, soft-eyed—  
to guide you  
Upstairs, sir.



## ***Between Walls***

the back wings  
of the

hospital where  
nothing

will grow lie  
cinders

in which shine  
the broken

pieces of a green  
bottle

## ***The Lily***

The branching head of  
tiger-lilies through the window  
in the air—

A humming bird  
is still on whirring wings  
above the flowers—

By spotted petals curling back  
and tongues that hang  
the air is seen—

It's raining—  
water's caught  
among the curled-back petals

Caught and held  
and there's a fly—  
are blossoming

## ***On Gay Wallpaper***

The green-blue ground  
is ruled with silver lines  
to say the sun is shining

And on this moral sea  
of grass or dreams lie flowers  
or baskets of desires

Heaven knows what they are  
between cerulean shapes  
laid regularly round

Mat roses and tridentate  
leaves of gold  
threes, threes and threes

Three roses and three stems  
the basket floating  
standing in the horns of blue

Repeated to the ceiling  
to the windows  
where the day

Blows in  
the scalloped curtains to  
the sound of rain

## **The Source**

### **I**

The slope of the heavy woods  
pales and disappears  
in the wall of must that hides

the edge above whose peak  
last night the moon—

But it is morning and a new light  
marks other things  
a pasture which begins

where silhouettes of scrub  
and balsams stand uncertainly

On whose green three maples  
are distinctly pressed  
beside a red barn

with new shingles in the old  
all cancelled by

A triple elm's inverted  
lichen mottled  
triple thighs from which

wisps of twigs  
droop with sharp leaves

Which shake in the crotch  
brushing the stained bark  
fitfully

## II

Beyond which lies  
the profound detail of the woods  
restless, distressed

soft underfoot  
the low ferns

Mounting a rusty root  
the pungent mould  
globular fungi

water in an old  
hoof print

Cow dung and in  
the uneven aisles of  
the trees

rock strewn a stone  
half-green

A spring in whose depth  
white sand bubbles  
overflows

clear under late raspberries  
and delicate-stemmed touch-me-nots

Where alders follow it marking  
the low ground  
the water is cast upon

a stair of uneven stones  
with a rustling sound

An edge of bubbles stirs  
swiftness is moulded  
speed grows

the profuse body advances  
over the stones unchanged

## ***Nantucket***

Flowers through the window  
lavender and yellow

changed by white curtains—  
Smell of cleanliness—

Sunshine of late afternoon—  
On the glass tray

a glass pitcher, the tumbler  
turned down, by which

a key is lying—And the  
immaculate white bed

## ***The Winds***

flowing edge to edge  
their clear edges meeting—  
the winds of this northern March—  
blow the bark from the trees  
the soil from the field  
the hair from the heads of  
girls, the shirts from the backs  
of the men, roofs from the  
houses, the cross from the  
church, clouds from the sky  
the fur from the faces of  
wild animals, crusts  
from scabby eyes, scales from  
the mind and husbands from wives

## Lines on Receiving the Dial's Award: 1927

In the common mind, a corked bottle,  
that senate's egg, today the prohibition  
we all feel has been a little lifted

The sick carpenter fished up another bottle,  
empty from his cellar  
for me last week, an old ginflask—

What a beauty! a fat quartflask of  
greenish glass, *The Father of His Country*  
embossed upon the side of it  
in glass letters capping the green profile  
and on the other  
*A little more Grape Captain Bragg*

A noteworthy antithesis, that, to petty  
thievery on a large scale: generous  
out of the sand, good to hold and to see—

It approaches poetry and my delight  
at having been even for a moment shored  
against a degradation  
ticked off daily round me like the newspapers

An old, empty bottle in my hand  
I go through the motions of drinking,  
drinking to *The Dial* and its courtesy



## ***The Red Lily***

To the bob-white's call  
and drone of reaper

tumbling daisies in the sun—  
one by one

about the smutting panels of  
white doors

grey shingles slip and fall—  
But you, a loveliness

of even lines  
curving to the throat, the

crossroads is your home.  
You are, upon

your steady stem  
one trumpeted wide flower

slightly tilted  
above a scale of buds—

Sometimes a farmer's wife  
gathers an armful

for her pitcher on the porch—  
Topping a stone wall

against the shale-ledge  
a field full—

By the road, the river  
the edge of the woods

—opening in the sun  
closing with the dark—

everywhere  
Red Lily

in your common cup  
all beauty lies—

### ***Interests of 1926***

It is spring  
and we walk up the filthysweet  
worn wooden stairs  
to it, close by the miniature  
bright poplar leaves  
at a grimy window  
wading . . . over the boards  
of the second floor . . .  
in the clear smile of  
the boyish husband  
all compassion for  
her injury . . . . and  
such is the  
celebrated May

## ***The Attic Which Is Desire***

the unused tent  
of

bare beams  
beyond which

directly wait  
the night

and day—  
Here

from the street  
by

\* \* \*  
\* S \*  
\* O \*  
\* D \*  
\* A \*  
\* \* \*

ringed with  
running lights

the darkened  
pane

exactly  
down the center

is  
transfixed

## ***This Is Just to Say***

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

## ***Birds and Flowers***

### **I**

It is summer, winter, any  
time—  
no time at all—but delight  
the springing up  
of those secret flowers  
the others imitate and so

become round  
extraordinary in petalage  
yellow, blue

fluted and globed  
slendercrimson  
moonshaped—

in clusters on a wall.  
Come!

And just now

you will not come, your  
ankles  
carry you another way, as

thought grown old—or  
older—in  
your eyes fire them against

me—small flowers  
birds flitting here and there  
between twigs

## II

What have I done  
to drive you away? It is  
winter, true enough, but

this day I love you.  
This day  
there is no time at all

more than in under  
my ribs where anatomists  
say the heart is—

And just today you  
will not have me. Well,  
tomorrow it may be snowing—

I'll keep after you, your  
repulse of me is no more  
than a rebuff to the weather—

If we make a desert of  
ourselves—we make  
a desert . . .

## III

Nothing is lost! the white  
shellwhite  
glassy, linenwhite, crystalwhite  
crocuses with orange centers  
the purple crocus with  
an orange center, the yellow  
crocus with a yellow center—

That which was large but  
seemed spent of  
power to fill the world with  
its wave of splendor is  
overflowing again into every  
corner—

Though the eye  
turns inward, the mind  
has spread its embrace—in  
a wind that  
roughs the stiff petals—  
More! the particular flower is  
blossoming . . .





***An Elegy for D. H. Lawrence***



## ***An Elegy for D. H. Lawrence***

Green points on the shrub  
and poor Lawrence dead.  
The night damp and misty  
and Lawrence no more in the world  
to answer April's promise  
with a fury of labor  
against waste, waste and life's  
coldness.

Once he received a letter—  
he never answered it—  
praising him: so English  
he had thereby raised himself  
to an unenglish greatness.  
Dead now and it grows clearer  
what bitterness drove him.

This is the time.  
The serpent in the grotto  
water dripping from the stone  
into a pool.  
Mediterranean evenings. Ashes  
of Cretan fires. And to the north  
forsythia hung with  
yellow bells in the cold.

Poor Lawrence  
worn with a fury of sad labor  
to create summer from  
spring's decay. English  
women. Men driven not to love  
but to the ends of the earth.  
The serpent turning his

stone-like head,  
the fixed agate eyes turn also.

And unopened jonquils  
hang their folded heads. No  
summer. But for Lawrence  
full praise in this  
half cold half season—  
before trees are in leaf and  
tufted grass stars  
unevenly the bare ground.

Slowly the serpent leans  
to drink by the tinkling water  
the forked tongue alert,  
Then fold after fold,  
glassy strength, passing  
a given point,  
as by desire drawn  
forward bodily, he glides  
smoothly in.

To stand by the sea or walk  
again along a river's bank and talk  
with a companion, to halt  
watching where the edge of water  
meets and lies upon  
the unmoving shore—  
Flood waters rise, and will rise,  
rip the quiet valley  
trap the gypsy and the girl  
She clings drowning to  
a bush in flower.

Remember, now, Lawrence dead.  
Blue squills in bloom—to  
the scorched aridity of

the Mexican plateau. Or baked  
public squares in the cities of  
Mediterranean islands  
where one waits for busses and  
boats come slowly along the water  
arriving.

But the sweep of spring over  
temperate lands, meadows and woods  
where the young walk and talk  
incompletely,  
straining to no summer,  
hearing the frogs, speaking of  
birds and insects—

Febrile spring moves not to heat  
but always more slowly,  
burdened by a weight of leaves.  
Nothing now  
to burst the bounds—  
remains confined by them. Heat,  
heat! Unknown. Poor Lawrence,  
dead and only the drowned  
fallen dancing from the deck  
of a pleasure boat  
unfading desire.

Rabbits, imaginings, the  
drama, literature, satire.  
The serpent cannot move  
his stony eyes, scarcely sees  
but touching the air  
with his forked tongue surmises  
and his body which dipped  
into the cold water  
is gone.

Violently the satiric sun  
that leads April not to  
the panting dance but to stillness  
in, into the brain, dips  
and is gone also.  
And sisters return  
through the dusk  
to the measured rancor  
of their unbending elders.

Greep, greep, greep the cricket  
chants where the snake  
with agate eyes leaned to the water.  
Sorrow to the young  
that Lawrence has passed  
unwanted from England.  
And in the gardens forsythia  
and in the woods  
now the crinkled spice-bush  
in flower.

## ***Adam and Eve and the City***





## ***To a Wood Thrush***

Singing across the orchard  
before night, answered  
from the depths  
of the wood, inversely  
and in a lower key—

First I tried to write  
conventionally praising you  
but found it no more  
than my own thoughts  
that I was giving. No.

What can I say?  
                    Vistas  
of delight waking suddenly  
before a cheated world.

## ***Fine Work with Pitch and Copper***

Now they are resting  
in the fleckless light  
separately in unison

like the sacks  
of sifted stone stacked  
regularly by twos

about the flat roof  
ready after lunch  
to be opened and strewn

The copper in eight  
foot strips has been  
beaten lengthwise

down the center at right  
angles and lies ready  
to edge the coping

One still chewing  
picks up a copper strip  
and runs his eye along it

## ***Young Woman at a Window***

She sits with  
tears on

her cheek  
her cheek on

her hand  
the child

•  
in her lap  
his nose

pressed  
to the glass

## ***The Rose***

First the warmth, variability  
color and frailty

A grace of petals skirting  
the tight-whorled cone

Come to generous abandon—  
to the mind as to the eye

Wide! Wider!  
Wide as if panting, until

the gold hawk's-eye speaks once  
coldly its perfection

## ***A Chinese Toy***

Six whittled chickens  
on a wooden bat

that peck within a  
circle pulled

by strings fast to  
a hanging weight

when shuttled by the  
playful hand

## ***La Belle Dame de Tous les Jours***

It speaks, it moves  
there is a sound and alteration—

The hair  
about the brow, the eyes  
symmetrically turn—

This has no part  
in what has been but smiles  
in selfishness  
unique—

                    against the snow  
new-fallen beyond  
the tropic window-sill

## **Adam**

He grew up by the sea  
on a hot island  
inhabited by negroes—mostly.  
There he built himself  
a boat and a separate room  
close to the water  
for a piano on which he practiced—  
by sheer doggedness  
and strength of purpose  
striving  
like an Englishman  
to emulate his Spanish friend  
and idol—the weather!

And there he learned  
to play the flute—not very well—

Thence he was driven  
out of Paradise—to taste  
the death that duty brings  
so daintily, so mincingly,  
with such a noble air—  
that enslaved him all his life  
thereafter—

And he left behind  
all the curious memories that come  
with shells and hurricanes—  
the smells  
and sounds and glancing looks  
that Latins know belong  
to boredom and long torrid hours  
and Englishmen

will never understand—whom  
duty has marked  
for special mention—with  
a tropic of its own  
and its own heavy-winged fowl  
and flowers that vomit beauty  
at midnight—

But the Latin has turned romance  
to a purpose cold as ice.  
He never sees  
or seldom  
what melted Adam's knees  
to jelly and despair—and  
held them up pontifically—

Underneath the whisperings  
of tropic nights  
there is a darker whispering  
that death invents especially  
for northern men  
whom the tropics  
have come to hold.

It would have been enough  
to know that never,  
never, never, never would  
peace come as the sun comes  
in the hot islands.  
But there was  
a special hell besides  
where black women lie waiting  
for a boy—

Naked on a raft  
he could see the barracudas

waiting to castrate him  
so the saying went—  
Circumstances take longer—

But being an Englishman  
though he had not lived in England  
*desde que avia cinco años*  
he never turned back  
but kept a cold eye always  
on the inevitable end  
never wincing—never to unbend—  
God's handyman  
going quietly into hell's mouth  
for a paper of reference—  
fetching water to posterity  
a British passport  
always in his pocket—  
muleback over Costa Rica  
eating pâtés of black ants

And the Latin ladies admired him  
and under their smiles  
darted the dagger of despair—  
in spite of  
a most thorough trial—  
found his English heart safe  
in the roseate steel. Duty  
the angel  
which with whip in hand . . .  
—along the low wall of paradise  
where they sat and smiled  
and flipped their fans  
at him—

He never had but the one home  
Staring Him in the eye

coldly  
and with patience—  
without a murmur, silently  
a desperate, unvarying silence  
to the unhurried last.



Pardon my injuries  
now that you are old—  
Forgive me my awkwardnesses  
my impatience  
and short replies—  
I sometimes detect in your face  
a puzzled pity for me  
your son—  
I have never been close to you  
—mostly your own fault;  
in that I am like you.  
It is as though  
you looked down from above  
at me—not  
with what they would describe  
as pride but the same  
that is in me: a sort  
of shame that the world  
should see you as I see you,  
a somewhat infantile creature—  
without subtlety—  
defenseless.

And because you are defenseless  
I too, horribly,  
take advantage of you,  
(as you of me)  
my mother, keep you  
imprisoned—in  
the name of protection  
when you want so wildly to escape  
as I wish also  
to escape and leap into chaos

(where Time has  
not yet begun)

When Adam died  
it came out clearly—  
Not what commonly  
might have been supposed but  
a demon, fighting for the fire  
it needed to breathe  
to live again.  
A last chance. You  
kicked blindly before you  
and nearly broke your leg  
against the metal—then sank  
exhausted.  
And that is the horror  
of my guilt—and the sweetness  
even at this late date  
in some kind of acknowledgement

I realize why you wish  
to communicate with the dead—  
And it is again I  
who try to hush you  
that you shall not  
make a fool of yourself  
and have them stare at you  
with natural faces—  
Trembling, sobbing  
and grabbing at the futile hands  
till a mind goes sour  
watching you—and flies off  
sick at the mumbling  
from which nothing clearly  
is ever spoken—

It not so much frightens  
as shames me. I want to protect  
you, to spare you the disgrace—  
seeing you reach out that way  
to self-inflicted emptiness—

As if you were not able  
to protect yourself—  
and me too—if we did not  
have to be so guarded—

Therefore I make this last plea:

Forgive me  
I have been a fool—  
(and remain a fool)  
If you are not already too blind  
too deaf, too lost in the past  
to know or to care—  
I will write a book about you—  
making you live (in a book!)  
as you still desperately  
want to live—  
to live always—unforgiving

I'll give you brandy  
or wine  
whenever I think you need it  
(need it)  
because it whips up  
your mind and your senses  
and brings color to your face  
—to enkindle that life  
too coarse for the usual,  
that sly obscenity  
that fertile darkness  
in which passion mates—

reflecting  
the lightnings of creation—  
and the moon—  
*"C'est la vieillesse  
inexorable qu'arrive!"*

One would think  
you would be reconciled with Time  
instead of clawing at Him  
that way, terrified  
in the night—screaming out  
unwilling, unappeased  
and without shame—

Might He not take  
that wasted carcass, crippled  
and deformed, that ruined face  
sightless, deafened—  
the color gone—that seems  
always listening, watching, waiting  
ashamed only  
of that single and last  
degradation—  
No. Never. Defenseless  
still you would keep  
every accoutrement  
which He has loaned  
till it shall be torn from  
your grasp, a final grip  
from those fingers  
which cannot hold a knife  
to cut the meat but which  
in a hypnotic ecstasy  
can so wrench a hand held out  
to you that our bones  
crack under the unwonted pressure—

## **St. Francis Einstein of the Daffodils**

*On the first visit of Professor Einstein to  
the United States in the spring of 1921.*

“Sweet land”  
at last!  
out of the sea—  
the Venusremembering wavelets  
rippling with laughter—  
freedom  
for the daffodils!  
—in a tearing wind  
that shakes  
the tufted orchards—  
Einstein, tall as a violet  
in the lattice-arbor corner  
is tall as  
a blossomy peartree

A Samos, Samos  
dead and buried. Lesbia  
a black cat in the freshturned  
garden. All dead.  
All flesh they sung  
is rotten  
Sing of it no longer—

Side by side young and old  
take the sun together—  
maples, green and red  
yellowbells  
and the vermilion quinceflower  
together—

The peartree  
with foetid blossoms  
sways its high topbranches  
with contrary motions  
and there are both pinkflowered  
and coralflowered peachtrees  
in the bare chickenyard  
of the old negro  
with white hair who hides  
poisoned fish-heads  
here and there  
where stray cats find them—  
find them

Spring days  
swift and mutable  
winds blowing four ways  
hot and cold  
shaking the flowers—

Now the northeast wind  
moving in fogs leaves the grass  
cold and dripping. The night  
is dark. But in the night  
the southeast wind approaches.  
The owner of the orchard  
lies in bed  
with open windows  
and throws off his covers  
one by one

## ***The Death of See***

One morning  
the wind scouring  
the streets

I read: Poet  
and woman  
found shot dead

Pact seen in  
murder—  
Suicide in

artist's suite—  
Their bodies  
fully clothed

were found  
half covered  
by

a blanket—  
See  
was described as

a poet  
but when or  
where his

poems were  
published M. could  
not say. . . .

Which adds  
a certain  
gravity—

Suddenly  
snow trees  
flashing

upon the mind  
from a clean  
world



## ***To an Elder Poet***

To be able  
and not to do it

Still as a flower

No flame,  
a flower spent  
with heat—

lovely flower  
                    hanging  
in the rain

Never!

Soberly

Whiter than day

Wait forever  
shaken by the rain  
                    forever

## ***Perpetuum Mobile: The City***

—a dream  
we dreamed  
each  
separately  
we two

of love  
and of  
desire—

that fused  
in the night—

in the distance  
over  
the meadows  
by day  
impossible—  
The city  
disappeared  
when  
we arrived—

A dream  
a little false

toward which  
now  
we stand  
and stare  
transfixed—

All at once  
in the east  
rising!

All white!

small  
as a flower—

a locust cluster  
a shad bush  
blossoming

Over the swamps  
a wild  
magnolia bud—  
greenish  
white  
a northern  
flower—

And so  
we live  
looking—

At night  
it wakes  
On the black  
sky—

a dream  
toward which  
we love—  
at night  
more  
than a little  
false—

We have bred  
we have dug  
we have figured up  
our costs  
we have bought  
an old rug—

We batter at our  
unsatisfactory  
brilliance—

There is no end  
to desire—

Let us break  
through  
and go there—

in  
vain!

—delectable  
amusement:

Milling about—

Money! in  
armored trucks—  
Two men  
walking  
at two paces from  
each other  
their right hands  
at the hip—  
on the butt of  
an automatic—

till they themselves  
hold up the bank  
and themselves  
    drive off  
for themselves  
    the money  
in an armored car—

For love!

Carefully  
    carefully tying  
carefully

    selected  
wisps of long  
dark hair  
    wisp  
by wisp  
upon the stubs  
of his kinky wool—  
For two hours  
    they worked—  
    until  
he coiled  
    the thick  
knot upon  
that whorish  
    head—

Dragged  
    insensible  
upon his face  
by the lines—

—a running horse

For love.

Their eyes  
blown out—

—for love, for love!

Neither the rain  
Nor the storm—  
can keep them

for love!

from the daily  
accomplishment  
of their  
appointed rounds—

Guzzling  
the creamy foods  
while  
out of sight  
in  
the sub-cellar—  
the waste fat  
the old vegetable  
chucked down  
a chute  
the foulest  
sink in the world—

And go  
on the out-tide  
ten thousands  
cots  
floating to sea

like weed  
that held back  
the pristine ships—

And fattened there  
an eel  
in the water pipe—

No end—

There!

There!

There!

—a dream  
of lights  
hiding

the iron reason  
and stone  
a settled  
cloud—

City

whose stars  
of matchless  
splendor—

and  
in bright-edged  
clouds  
the moon—

bring

silence

breathlessly—

Tearful city  
on a summer's day  
the hard grey  
dwindling  
in a wall of  
rain—

farewell!

## **Cancion**

*(Lupercio De Argensola)*

*Alivia sus fatigas  
El labrador cansado  
Quando su yerta barba escarcha cubre,  
Pensando en las espigas  
Del Agosto abrasado,  
Y en los lagares ricos del Octubre.*

The tired workman  
Takes his ease  
When his stiff beard's all frosted over  
Thinking of blazing  
August's corn  
And the brimming wine-cribs of October.



***Morning***

***The Crimson Cyclamen***



## Morning

on the hill is cool! Even the dead  
grass stems that start with the wind along  
the crude board fence are less than harsh.

—a broken fringe of wooden and brick fronts  
above the city, fading out,  
beyond the watertank on stilts,  
an isolated house or two here and there,  
into the bare fields.

The sky is immensely  
wide! No one about. The houses badly  
numbered.

Sun benches at the curb bespeak  
another season, truncated poplars  
that having served for shade  
served also later for the fire. Rough  
cobble and abandoned car rails interrupted  
by precipitous cross streets.

Down-hill  
in the small, separate gardens (Keep out  
you) bare fruit trees and among tangled  
cords of unpruned grapevines low houses  
showered by unobstructed light.

Pulley lines  
to poles, on one a blue  
and white tablecloth bellying easily.  
Feather beds from windows and swathed in  
old linoleum and burlap, fig trees. Barrels  
over shrubs.

Level of  
the hill, two old men walking and talking  
come on together.

—Firewood, all lengths  
and qualities stacked behind patched  
out-houses. Uses for ashes.  
And a church spire sketched on the sky,  
of sheet-metal and open beams, to resemble  
a church spire—

—These Wops are wise

—and walk about

absorbed among stray dogs and sparrows,  
pigeons wheeling overhead, their  
feces falling—

or shawled and jug in hand  
beside a concrete wall down which,  
from a loose water-pipe, a stain descends,  
the wall descending also, holding up  
a garden—On its side the pattern of  
the boards that made the forms is still  
discernible. —to the oil-streaked  
highway—

Whence, turn and look where,  
at the crest, the shoulders of a man  
are disappearing gradually below the worn  
fox-fur of tattered grasses—

And round again, the  
two old men in caps crossing at  
a gutter now, *Pago, Pago!* still absorbed.

—a young man's face staring  
from a dirty window—Women's Hats—and  
at the door a cat, with one fore-foot on  
the top step, looks back—

Scatubitch!

Sacks of flour  
piled inside the bakery window, their  
pale trade-marks flattened to  
the glass—

And with a stick,  
scratching within the littered field—  
old plaster, bits of brick—to find what  
coming? In God's name! Washed out, worn  
out, scavenged and rescavenged—

Spirit of place rise from these ashes  
repeating secretly an obscure refrain:

This is my house and here I live.  
Here I was born and this is my office—

—passionately leans examining, stirring  
with the stick, a chuld following.  
Roots, salads? Medicinal, stomachic?  
Of what sort? Abortifacient? To be dug,  
split, submitted to the sun, brewed  
cooled in a teacup and applied?

Kid Hot

Jock, in red paint, smeared along  
the fence.—and still remains, of—  
if and if, as the sun rises, rolls and  
comes again.

But every day, every day  
she goes and kneels—

died of tuberculosis  
when he came back from the war, nobody  
else in our family ever had it except a  
baby once after that—

alone on the cold  
floor beside the candled altar, stifled  
weeping—and moans for his lost  
departed soul the tears falling  
and wiped away, turbid with her grime.

Covered, swaddled, pinched and saved  
shrivelled, broken—to be rewetted and  
used again.

## **The Crimson Cyclamen**

*(To the Memory of Charles Demuth)*

White suffused with red  
more rose than crimson  
—all acolor  
the petals flare back  
from the stooping craters  
of those flowers  
as from a wind rising—  
And though the light  
that enfolds and pierces  
them discovers blues  
and yellows there also—  
and crimson's a dull word  
beside such play—  
yet the effect against  
this winter where  
they stand—is crimson—

It is miraculous  
that flower should rise  
by flower  
alike in loveliness—  
as thought mirrors  
of some perfection  
could never be  
too often shown—  
silence holds them—  
in that space. And  
color has been construed  
from emptiness  
to waken there—

But the form came gradually.  
The plant was there  
before the flowers  
as always—the leaves,  
day by day changing. In  
September when the first  
pink pointed bud still  
bowed below, all the leaves  
heart-shaped  
were already spread—  
quirked and green  
and stenciled with a paler  
green  
irregularly  
across and round the edge—

Upon each leaf it is  
a pattern more  
of logic than a purpose  
links each part to the rest,  
an abstraction  
playfully following  
centripetal  
devices, as of pure thought—  
the edge tying by  
convergent, crazy rays  
with the center—  
where that dips  
cupping down to the  
upright stem—the source  
that has splayed out  
fanwise and returns  
upon itself in the design  
thus decoratively—



Such are the leaves  
freakish, of the air  
as thought is, of roots  
dark, complex from  
subterranean revolutions  
and rank odors  
waiting for the moon—  
The young leaves  
coming among the rest  
are more crisp  
and deeply cupped  
the edges rising first  
impatient of the slower  
stem—the older  
level, the oldest  
with the edge already  
fallen a little backward—  
the stem alone  
holding the form  
stiffly a while longer—

Under the leaf, the same  
though the smooth green  
is gone. Now the ribbed  
design—if not  
the purpose, is explained.  
The stem's pink flanges,  
strongly marked,  
stand to the frail edge,  
dividing, thinning  
through the pink and downy  
mesh—as the round stem  
is pink also—cranking  
to penciled lines  
angularly deft

through all, to link together  
the unnicked argument  
to the last crinkled edge—  
where the under and the over  
meet and disappear  
and the air alone begins  
to go from them—  
the conclusion left still  
blunt, floating  
if warped and quaintly flecked  
whitened and streaked  
resting  
upon the tie of the stem—

But half hidden under them  
such as they are  
it begins that must  
put thought to rest—

wakes in tinted beaks  
still raising the head  
and passion  
is loosed—

its small lusts  
addressed still to  
the knees and to sleep—  
abandoning argument

lifts  
through the leaves  
day by day  
and one day opens!

The petals!  
the petals undone

loosen all five and  
swing up

The flower  
flows to release—

Fast within a ring  
where the compact  
agencies  
of conception

lie mathematically  
ranged  
round the  
hair-like sting—

From such a pit  
the color flows  
over  
a purple rim

upward to  
the light! the light!  
all around—  
Five petals

as one  
to flare, inverted  
a full flower  
each petal tortured

eccentrically  
the while, warped edge  
jostling  
half-turned edge

side by side  
until compact, tense  
evenly stained  
to the last fine edge

an ecstasy  
from the empurpled ring  
climbs up (though  
firm there still)

each petal  
by excess of tensions  
in its own flesh  
all rose—

rose red  
standing until it  
bends backward  
upon the rest, above,

answering  
ecstasy with excess  
all together  
acrobatically

not as if bound  
(though still bound)  
but upright  
as if they hung

from above  
to the streams  
with which  
they are veined and glow—  
the frail fruit  
by its frailty supreme

opening in the tense moment  
to no bean  
no completion  
no root  
no leaf and no stem  
but color only and a form—

It is passion  
earlier and later than thought  
that rises above thought  
at instant peril—peril  
itself a flower  
that lifts and draws it on—

Frailer than level thought  
more convolute  
rose red  
highest  
the soonest to wither  
blacken  
and fall upon itself  
formless—

And the flowers  
grow older and begin  
to change, larger now  
less tense, when at the full  
relaxing, widening  
the petals falling down  
the color paling  
through violaceous to  
tinted white—

The structure of the petal  
that was all red  
beginning now to show

from a deep central vein  
other finely scratched veins  
dwindling to that edge  
through which the light  
more and more shows  
fading through gradations  
immeasurable to the eye—

The day rises and swifter  
briefer  
more frailly relaxed  
than thought that still  
holds good—the color  
draws back while still  
the flower grows  
the rose of it nearly all lost  
a darkness of dawning purple  
paints a deeper afternoon—

The day passes  
in a horizon of colors  
all meeting  
less severe in loveliness  
the petals fallen now well back  
till flower touches flower  
all round  
at the petal tips  
merging into one flower—

## ***Recent Verse 1938***

A power-house  
in the shape of  
a red brick chair  
90 feet high

on the seat of which  
sit the figures  
of two metal  
stacks—aluminum—

commanding an area  
of squalid shacks  
side by side—  
from one of which

buff smoke  
streams while under  
a grey sky  
the other remains

passive today—



## **Autumn**

A stand of people  
by an open

grave underneath  
the heavy leaves

celebrates  
the cut and fill

for the new road  
where

an old man  
on his knees

reaps a basket-  
ful of

matted grasses for  
his goats

## **The Term**

A rumpled sheet  
of brown paper  
about the length

and apparent bulk  
of a man was  
rolling with the

wind slowly over  
and over in  
the street as

a car drove down  
upon it and  
crushed it to

the ground. Unlike  
a man it rose  
again rolling

with the wind over  
and over to be as  
it was before.

## ***Weasel Snout***

Staring she  
kindles  
the street windows

to daintiness—  
Under  
her driving looks

gems plainly  
colored blue and  
red and

green grow  
fabulous again—She  
is the modern marvel

the ray from  
whose bulbous eyes  
starts

through glass walls  
to animate  
dead things—

## ***Advent of Today***

South wind  
striking in—torn  
spume—trees

inverted over trees  
scudding low  
a sea become winged

bringing today  
out of yesterday  
in bursts of rain—

a darkened presence  
above  
detail of October grasses

veiled at once  
in a downpour—  
conflicting rattle of

the rain against  
the storm's slow majesty—  
leaves

rising  
instead of falling  
the sun

coming and going  
toward the  
middle parts of the sky

## **The Sun**

lifts heavily  
and cloud and sea  
weigh upon the  
unwaiting air—

Hasteless  
the silence is  
divided  
by small waves

that wash away  
night whose wave  
is without  
sound and gone—

Old categories  
slacken  
memoryless—  
weed and shells where

in the night  
a high tide left  
its mark  
and block of half

burned wood washed  
clean—  
The slovenly bearded  
rocks hiss—

Obscene refuse  
charms  
this modern shore—  
Listen!

it is a sea-snail  
singing—  
Relax, relent—  
the sun has climbed

the sand is  
drying—Lie  
by the broken boat—  
the eel-grass

bends  
and is released  
again—Go down, go  
down past knowledge

shelly lace—  
among the rot  
of children  
screaming

their delight—  
logged  
in the penetrable  
nothingness

whose heavy body  
opens  
to their leaps  
without a wound—

## ***A Bastard Peace***

—where a heavy  
woven-wire fence  
topped with jagged ends, encloses  
a long cinder-field by the river—

A concrete disposal tank at  
one end, small wooden  
pit-covers scattered about—above  
sewer intakes, most probably—

Down the center's a service path  
graced on one side by  
a dandelion in bloom—and a white  
butterfly—

The sun parches still  
the parched grass. Along  
the fence, blocked from the water  
leans the washed-out street—

Three cracked houses—  
a willow, two chickens, a  
small boy, with a home-made push cart,  
walking by, waving a whip—

Gid ap! No other traffic or  
like to be.  
There to rest, to improvise and  
unbend! Through the fence

beyond the field and shining  
water, 12 o'clock blows  
but nobody goes  
other than the kids from school—

## ***The Poor***

It's the anarchy of poverty  
delights me, the old  
yellow wooden house indented  
among the new brick tenements

Or a cast-iron balcony  
with panels showing oak branches  
in full leaf. It fits  
the dress of the children

reflecting every stage and  
custom of necessity—  
Chimneys, roofs, fences of  
wood and metal in an unfenced

age and enclosing next to  
nothing at all the old man  
in a sweater and soft black  
hat who sweeps the sidewalk—

his own ten feet of it  
in a wind that fitfully  
turning his corner has  
overwhelmed the entire city



## ***To a Dead Journalist***

Behind that white brow  
now the mind simply sleeps—  
the eyes, closed, the  
lips, the mouth,

the chin, no longer useful,  
the prow of the nose.  
But rumors of the news,  
unrealizable,

cling still among those  
silent, butted features, a  
sort of wonder at  
this scoop

come now, too late:  
beneath the lucid ripples  
to have found so monstrous  
an obscurity.

## ***Africa***

Quit writing  
and in Morocco  
raise a beard

Go without a hat  
like poor Clew  
who braved

the desert heat.  
Or if you will  
like Herb

sit on a hotel  
balcony and  
watch your ship

while the girls  
bring wines  
and food

to you privately.  
The language?  
Make money.

Organize  
The language.  
Right.

## **Lovely Ad**

All her charms  
are bubbles  
from a tilted  
cigarette—

And look!  
she sees  
to light them  
his face!

Whereas for us  
his sleek  
black hair  
is hint enough.

## **4th of July**

### I

The ship moves  
but its smoke  
moves with the wind  
faster than the ship

—thick coils of it  
through leafy trees  
pressing  
upon the river

### II

The heat makes  
this place of the woods  
a room  
in which two robins pain

crying  
distractedly  
over the plight of  
their unhappy young

### III

During the explosions  
at dawn, the celebrations  
I could hear  
a native cuckoo

in the distance  
as at dusk, before  
I'd heard  
a night hawk calling

## ***The Defective Record***

Cut the bank for the fill.  
Dump sand  
pumped out of the river  
into the old swale

killing whatever was  
there before—including  
even the muskrats. Who did it?  
There's the guy.

Him in the blue shirt and  
turquoise skullcap.  
Level it down  
for him to build a house

on to build a  
house on to build a house on  
to build a house  
on to build a house on to . . .

## ***Middle***

of this profusion  
a robin flies carrying  
food on its tongue  
and a flag

red white and  
blue hangs  
motionless. Return  
from the sick

wean the mind  
again from among  
the foliage also of  
infection. There

is a brass band at  
the monument  
and the children  
that paraded

the blistering streets  
are giving lustily  
to the memory  
of our war dead.

## ***A Fond Farewell***

You? Why you're  
just sucking  
my life blood out.

What do I care  
if the baker  
and the garbage man

must be served.  
Take what  
you might give

and be damned  
to you. I'm  
going elsewhere.

## ***The Unknown***

Do you exist  
my pretty bird  
flying  
above the snow?

Are you actually  
flying  
or do I imagine  
it so?

Detail of wing  
and breast  
unquestionably  
there—

Or do I merely  
think you  
perfect  
in mid-air?

### *CODA*

Beating heart  
feather  
of wing and breast

to this  
bleakness  
antithetical

In love  
dear love, my love  
detail is all



## **Porous**

Cattail fluff  
blows in  
at the bank door,

and on wings  
of chance  
the money floats out,

lighter than a dream,  
through the heavy walls  
and vanishes.

## ***The Petunia***

Purple!  
for months unknown  
but for  
the barren sky.

A purple trumpet  
fragile  
as our hopes  
from the very  
sand  
saluting us.

## ***The Graceful Bastion***

A white butterfly  
in an August garden,  
light as it may seem

among the zinnias  
and verbenas,  
fragile among the red

trumpeted petunias,  
is ribbed with steel  
wired to the sun

whose triumphant power  
will keep it safe,  
free as laughter,

secure against  
bombardments no more  
dangerous to its

armored might than if  
the cotton clouds  
should merely fall.

## ***The Return to Work***

Promenading their  
skirted galleons of sex,  
the two office assistants

rock unevenly  
together  
down the broad stairs,

one  
(as I follow slowly  
in the trade wind

of my admiration)  
gently  
slapping her thighs.

## ***The Deceptrices***

Because they are not,  
they paint their lips  
and dress like whores.

Because they are uncertain,  
they put on the bold  
looks of experience.

This is their youth, too  
soon gone, too soon  
the unalterable conclusion.

## **Detail**

Her milk don't seem to . .  
She's always hungry but . .  
She seems to *gain* all right,  
I don't know.

## **Detail**

Doc, I bin lookin' for you  
I owe you two bucks.

How you doin'?

Fine. When I get it  
I'll bring it up to you.

## **Detail**

Hey!  
Can I have some more  
milk?

YEEEEAAAAASSSSS!  
—always the gentle  
mother!

## ***Detail***

I had a misfortune in September,  
just at the end of my vacation.

I been keepin' away from that for years.  
Just an accident. No foundation.

None at all, no feeling. I'm too  
old to have a child. Why I'm fifty!

## ***Their Most Prized Possession—***

their liberty—

Hands behind a coat  
shiny green. Tall, the eyes  
downcast—

Sunlight through a clutter of  
wet clouds, lush weeds—

Hungry as an oriole.                      The oriole!

## **Unnamed**

*From "Paterson"*

I

Your lovely hands  
Your lovely tender hands!  
Reflections of what grace  
what heavenly joy

predicted for the world  
in knowing you—  
blest, as am I, and humbled  
by such ecstasy.

2

When I saw  
the flowers

I was  
thunderstruck!

You should not  
have been—

Tulips, she said  
and smiled.

3

I bought a new  
bathing suit

Just pants  
and a brassiere—

I haven't shown  
it

to my mother  
yet.

4

Better than flowers  
is a view of yourself  
my darling—

I'm so glad you came  
I thought I should never  
see you again.

## ***At the Bar***

Hi, open up a dozen.

Wha'cha tryin' ta do—  
charge ya batteries?

Make it two.

Easy girl!  
You'll blow a fuse if  
ya keep that up.

## ***Graph for Action***

Don't say "humbly".  
"Respectfully", yes  
but not "humbly".

And the Committee  
both farted  
and that settled it.



## ***Breakfast***

Twenty sparrows  
on

a scattered  
turd

Share and share  
alike.

## ***To Greet a Letter-Carrier***

Why'n't you bring me  
a good letter? One with  
lots of money in it.  
I could make use of that.  
Atta boy! Atta boy!

## **These**

are the desolate, dark weeks  
when nature in its barrenness  
equals the stupidity of man.

The year plunges into night  
and the heart plunges  
lower than night

to an empty, windswept place  
without sun, stars or moon  
but a peculiar light as of thought

that spins a dark fire—  
whirling upon itself until,  
in the cold, it kindles

to make a man aware of nothing  
that he knows, not loneliness  
itself—Not a ghost but

would be embraced—emptiness,  
despair—(They  
whine and whistle) among

the flashes and booms of war;  
houses of whose rooms  
the cold is greater than can be thought,

the people gone that we loved,  
the beds lying empty, the couches  
damp, the chairs unused—

Hide it away somewhere  
out of the mind, let it get roots  
and grow, unrelated to jealous

ears and eyes—for itself.  
In this mine they come to dig—all.  
Is this the counterfoil to sweetest

music? The source of poetry that  
seeing the clock stopped, says,  
The clock has stopped

that ticked yesterday so well?  
and hears the sound of lakewater  
splashing—that is now stone.

## ***The Drunkard***



## The Drunkard

*(This poem, recently recovered, was sent by me to my mother in the fall of 1923 accompanied by a letter in part as follows:*

*Dearest Mother: Here is a poem to set beside some of my "incomprehensible" latter work. I think you will like this one. It seems the sort of thing that I am going to do. Art is a curious command. We must do what we are bidden to do and can go only so far as the light permits. I am always earnest as you, if anyone, must know. But no doubt I puzzle you—as I do myself. Plenty of love from your son. W.)*

You drunken  
tottering  
bum

by Christ  
in spite of all  
your filth

and sordidness  
I envy  
you

It is the very face  
of love  
itself

abandoned  
in that powerless  
committal

to despair

## **Paterson: Episode 17**

Beat hell out of it  
Beautiful Thing  
spotless cap  
and crossed white straps  
over the dark rippled cloth—  
Lift the stick  
above that easy head  
where you sit by the ivied  
church, one arm  
buttressing you  
long fingers spread out  
among the clear grass prongs—  
and drive it down  
Beautiful Thing  
that your caressing body kiss  
and kiss again  
that holy lawn—

And again: obliquely—  
legs curled under you as a  
deer's leaping—  
pose of supreme indifference  
sacrament  
to a summer's day  
Beautiful Thing  
in the unearned suburbs  
then pause  
the arm fallen—  
what memories  
of what forgotten face  
brooding upon that lily stem?

The incredible  
nose straight from the brow  
the empurpled lips  
and dazzled half-sleepy eyes  
Beautiful Thing  
of some trusting animal  
makes a temple  
of its place of savage slaughter  
revealing  
the damaged will incites still  
to violence  
consummately beautiful thing  
and falls about your resting  
shoulders—

Gently! Gently!  
as in all things an opposite  
that awakes  
the fury, conceiving  
knowledge  
by way of despair that has  
no place  
to lay its glossy head—  
Save only—Not alone!  
Never, if possible  
alone! to escape the accepted  
chopping block  
and a square hat!—

And as reverie gains and  
your joints loosen  
the trick's done!  
Day is covered and we see you—  
but not alone!  
drunk and bedraggled to release  
the strictness of beauty



under a sky full of stars  
Beautiful Thing  
and a slow moon—

The car  
had stopped long since  
when the others  
came and dragged those out  
who had you there  
indifferent  
to whatever the anesthetic  
Beautiful Thing  
might slum away the bars—  
Reek of it!  
What does it matter?  
could set free  
only the one thing—  
But you!  
—in your white lace dress  
“the dying swan”  
and high heeled slippers—tall  
as you already were—  
till your head  
through fruitful exaggeration  
was reaching the sky and the  
prickles of its ecstasy  
Beautiful Thing!

And the guys from Paterson  
beat up  
the guys from Newark and told  
them to stay the hell out  
of their territory and then  
socked you one  
across the nose  
Beautiful Thing  
for good luck and emphasis

cracking it  
till I must believe that all  
desired women have had each  
in the end  
a busted nose  
and live afterward marked up  
Beautiful Thing  
for memory's sake  
to be credible in their deeds

Then back to the party'  
and they maled  
and femaled you jealously  
Beautiful Thing  
as if to discover when and  
by what miracle  
there should escape what?  
still to be possessed  
out of what part  
Beautiful Thing  
should it look?  
or be extinguished—  
Three days in the same dress  
up and down—  
It would take  
a Dominie to be patient  
Beautiful Thing  
with you—

The stroke begins again—  
regularly  
automatic  
contrapuntal to  
the flogging  
like the beat of famous lines  
in the few excellent poems

woven to make you  
gracious  
and on frequent occasions  
foul drunk  
Beautiful Thing  
pulse of release  
to the attentive  
and obedient mind.

## ***The Last Words of My English Grandmother***

1920

There were some dirty plates  
and a glass of milk  
beside her on a small table  
near the rank, disheveled bed—

Wrinkled and nearly blind  
she lay and snored  
rousing with anger in her tones  
to cry for food,

Gimme something to eat—  
They're starving me—  
I'm all right I won't go  
to the hospital. No, no, no

Give me something to eat  
Let me take you  
to the hospital, I said  
and after you are well

you can do as you please.  
She smiled, Yes  
you do what you please first  
then I can do what I please—

Oh, oh, oh! she cried  
as the ambulance men lifted  
her to the stretcher—  
Is this what you call

making me comfortable?  
By now her mind was clear—  
Oh you think you're smart  
you young people,

she said, but I'll tell you  
you don't know anything.  
Then we started.  
On the way

we passed a long row  
of elms. She looked at them  
awhile out of  
the ambulance window and said,

What are all those  
fuzzy-looking things out there?  
Trees? Well, I'm tired  
of them and rolled her head away.

## **The Waitress**

No wit (and none needed) but  
the silence of her ways, grey eyes in  
a depth of black lashes—  
The eyes look and the look falls.

There is no way, no way. So close  
one may feel the warmth of the cheek and yet  
there is  
no way.

The benefits of poverty are a roughened skin  
of the hands, the broken  
knuckles, the stained wrists.

Serious. Not as the others.  
All the rest are liars, all but you.

Wait on us.  
Wait on us, the hair held back practically  
by a net, close behind the ears, at the sides of  
the head. But the eyes—  
but the mouth, lightly (quickly)  
touched with rouge.  
The black dress makes the hair dark, strangely  
enough, and the white dress makes it light.  
There is a mole under the jaw, low under  
the right ear—

And what arms!  
The glassruby ring  
on the fourth finger of the left hand.  
—and the movements  
under the scant dress as the weight of the tray  
makes the hips shift forward slightly in lifting  
and beginning to walk—

The Nominating Committee presents the following  
resolutions, etc. etc. etc. All those  
in favor signify by saying, Aye. Contrariminded,  
No.

Carried.

And aye, and aye, and aye!

And the way the bell-hop runs downstairs·

ta tuck a

ta tuck a

ta tuck a

ta tuck a

ta tuck a

and the gulls in the open window screaming over  
the slow  
break of the cold waves—

O unlit candle with the soft white  
plume, Sunbeam Finest Safety Matches all together in  
a little box—

And the reflections of both in  
the mirror and the reflection of the hand, writing  
writing—

Speak to me of her!

—and nobody else and nothing else  
in the whole city, not an electric sign of shifting  
colors, fourfoot daisies and acanthus fronds going  
from  
red to orange, green to blue—forty feet across—

Wait on us, wait  
on us with your momentary beauty to be enjoyed by  
none of us. Neither by you, certainly,  
nor by me.

## ***A Marriage Ritual***

Above  
the darkness of a river upon  
winter's icy sky  
dreams the silhouette of the city:

This is my own! a flower,  
a fruit, an animal by itself—

It does not recognize me  
and never will. Still, it is my own  
and my heart goes out to it  
dumbly—

but eloquently in  
my own breast for you whom I love  
—and cannot express what  
my love is, how it varies, though  
I waste it—

It is  
a river flowing through refuse  
the dried sticks of weeds  
and falling shell-ice lilac  
from above as if with thoughts  
of you—

This is my face and its moods  
my moods, a riffled whiteness  
shaken by the flow  
that's constant in its swiftness  
as a pool—



A Polack in  
the stinging wind, her arms  
wrapped to her breast  
comes shambling near. To look  
at what? downstream. It is  
an old-world flavor. the poor  
the unthrifty, passionately biased  
by what errors of conviction—

Now a boy  
is rolling a stout metal drum  
up from below the river bank.  
The woman and the boy, two  
thievish figures, struggle with  
the object. . . . in this light!

And still  
there is one leafless tree  
just at the water's edge and—

my face  
constant to you!

## ***The Swaggering Gait***

Bareheaded  
the hair blond in tight curls  
the heavy and worn

blue sweater  
buttoned tight  
under a cold sky

he walks  
and lifts the butt of cigar  
he holds

to his pursing lips  
alone—  
save for the tilt

of his shoulders  
the swing of his knees—  
Even the paper

lunch bag in his other hand  
sharing  
that one distinction

## ***The Predictor of Famine***

White day, black river  
corrugated and swift—

as the stone of the sky  
on the prongy ring  
of the tarnished city  
is smooth and without motion:

A gull flies low  
upstream, his beak tilted  
sharply, his eye  
alert to the providing water.

## ***Illegitimate Things***

Water still flows—  
The thrush still sings

though in  
the skirts of the sky

at the bottom of  
the distance

huddle  
. . . . echoing cannon!

Whose silence revives  
valley after

valley to peace  
as poems still conserve

the language  
of old ecstasies.

## ***The Province***

The figure  
of tall  
white grass  
by the cinder-bank  
keeps its alignment  
faultlessly.  
Moves'  
in the brilliant  
channels  
of the wind

Shines'  
its polished  
shafts  
and feathered  
fronds  
ensconced there  
colorless  
beyond all feeling

This is  
the principle  
of the godly,  
fluted, a  
statue  
tall and pale  
—lifeless  
save only in  
beauty,  
the kernel  
of all seeking,  
the eternal

## **The Brilliance**

Oh sock, sock, sock!  
brief but persistent.  
Emulate the gnat  
or a tree's leaves

that are not the tree  
but mass to shape it.  
Finis! Finish  
and get out of this.

## **Fragment**

My God, Bill, what have you done?

What do you think I've done? I've  
opened up the world.

Where did you get them? Marvellous  
beautiful!

Where does all snot come from? Under  
the nose,

Yea-uh?

—the gutter, where everything comes  
from, the manure heap.

## ***The Yellow Season***

The black, long-tailed,  
one then, unexpectedly, another  
glide easily on a curtain  
of yellow leaves, upward—

The season wakens! loveliness  
chirping and barking stands  
among the branches, its  
narrow-clawed toes and furry  
hands moving in the leaves—

Round white eyes dotted with  
jet live still, alert—in  
all gentleness! unabated  
beyond the cackle  
of death's stinking certainty.

## ***Mistrust of the Beloved***

At the height of love  
a darkness intervenes:  
I hated you the whole  
first year.

It will reawaken.  
Be patient. (Ah but what  
of the need to be  
patient?)

It will reawaken by  
somersaults  
and see-saws, your hatred  
will reawaken.



## ***Passer Domesticus***

Shabby little bird  
I suppose it's  
the story every-  
where, if you're

domestic you're drab.  
Peep peep!  
the nightingale  
's your cousin but

these flagrant  
amours get you no-  
where. Dull  
to the eye you have

crept in unmolested.

## ***The United States***

The government of your body, sweet,  
shall be my model for the world.  
There is no desire in me to rule  
that world or to advise it. Look  
how it rouses with the sun, shuts  
with night and sleeps fringed by  
the slowly turning stars. I boil  
I freeze before its tropics and its  
cold. Its shocks are mine and to  
the peaceful legislature of its seas,  
by you its president,  
I yield my willing services.

## ***The Sun Bathers***

A tramp thawing out  
on a doorstep  
against an east wall  
Nov. 1, 1933:

a young man begrimed  
and in an old  
army coat  
wriggling and scratching

while a fat negress  
in a yellow-house window  
nearby  
leans out and yawns

into the fine weather

## ***Sparrow Among Dry Leaves***

The sparrows  
by the iron fence-post  
hardly seen

for the dry leaves  
that half  
cover them—

stirring up  
the leaves—fight  
and chirp

stridently  
search  
and

peck the sharp  
gravel to  
good digestion

and love's  
obscure and insatiable  
appetite

## ***The Men***

Wherein is Moscow's dignity  
more than Passaic's dignity?  
A few men have added color better  
to the canvas, that's all.

The river is the same  
the bridges are the same  
there is the same to be discovered  
of the sun—

Look how cold, steelgrey  
run the waters of the Passaic.  
The Church-of-the-Polaks'  
bulbous towers

kiss the sky just so sternly  
so dreamily  
as in Warsaw, as in Moscow—  
Violet smoke rises

from the mill chimneys—Only  
the men are different who see it  
draw it down in their minds  
or might be different

## **Song**

The black-winged gull  
of love is flying—  
hurl of the waters'  
futile might!

Tirelessly  
his deft strokes plying  
he skims free in the licking  
waves' despite—

There is no lying  
to his shrill mockery  
of their torment  
day or night.

## **Descent**

From disorder (a chaos)  
order grows  
—grows fruitful.  
The chaos feeds it. Chaos  
feeds the tree.

## ***You Have Pissed Your Life***

Any way you walk  
Any way you turn  
Any way you stand  
Any way you lie  
You have pissed your life

From an ineffectual fool  
butting his head blindly  
against obstacles, become  
brilliant—focusing,  
performing accurately to  
a given end—

Any way you walk  
Any way you turn  
Any way you stand  
Any way you lie  
You have pissed your life

## ***Moon and Stars***

January! The beginning!  
A moon  
scoured by the wind  
calls

from its cavern. A vacant  
eye  
stares. The wind  
howls.

Among bones in rose flesh  
singing  
wake the stormy  
stars.

## ***The Girl***

The wall, as I watched, came neck-high  
to her walking difficultly  
seaward of it over sand and stones. She

made the effort, mounted it while I  
had my head turned, I merely  
saw her on top at the finish rolling

over. She stood up dusted off her skirt  
then there lifted her feet  
unencumbered to skip dancing away

## ***Simplex Sigilum Veri***

an american papermatch packet  
closed, gilt with a panel insert,  
the bank, a narrow building  
black, in a blue sky, puffs of

white cloud, the small windows  
in perspective, bright green grass—  
a sixinch metal tray, polished  
bronze, holding a blue pencil

hexagonal, its bright brassy  
butt catching the window light,  
the dullred eraser half worn  
down and a cheap brownenameled

pen-holder rest on the brown  
marbled field of the stained blotter  
by an oystershell smudged  
with cigarette ash, a primrose plant

in a gold-ringed saucer, flowerless—  
surfaces of all sorts  
bearing printed characters, bottles  
words printed on the backs of

two telephone directories, titles  
for poems, The Advertising Biographical  
Calendar of Medicine, Wednesday 18  
Thursday 19, Friday 20, papers

of various shades sticking out  
from under others, throwing



the printing out of line portrait  
of all that which we have lost,

a truncated pyramid, bronzed  
metal (probably the surface  
only) to match the tray, to which  
a square, hinged lid is fixed,

the inkstand, from whose  
imagined top the Prince of Wales  
having climbed up, once with all  
his might drove a golf ball.

## ***The Phoenix and the Tortoise***

The link between Barnum and Calas  
is the freak  
against which Rexroth rages,  
the six-legged cow, the legless woman

for each presents a social concept  
seeking approval, a pioneer society  
and a modern asserting the norm  
by stress of the Minotaur.

It's a legitimate manoeuvre,  
perhaps it is all art  
and Barnum our one genius (in the arts)  
on the moral plane: the freak

and the athlete: the circus,  
by which we return from Agamemnon  
sober to our tasks—of pleasure—  
and to our minds. If so,

in spite of Rexroth, Barnum  
our Aeschylus, we  
should show ourselves  
more courteous to Calas the Greek

who has come from Oxford via Paris  
to enlighten us, affect  
less flippancy toward his  
*Confound the Wise:*

"If, in a study such as this, in which the ideas of the  
writer are discussed, we stop short at questions concerning  
form, it is because forms—and I hope this appears clearly

in everything I have so far said—are for us tightly bound up with ideas and feelings. On this point I am a monist and opposed to the positivistic and dualistic habits that the last century has bequeathed us. Any error concerning form is consequently a fundamental error, and when ideas are erroneous and when feelings are untrue, then conformity bursts out and appears in form.”

Read of Miranda

the Portuguese torso—connoting  
Rexroth's Tortoise, say what he will:  
read one then the other,  
moral concepts both, curiously linked,

by which in time we may  
behold, “the sun set where it did arise  
and moons grow into virgins' eyes,  
post sprout leaves and turn a tree and

morbid fruit normality,” as in  
the fluctuating molecule; details of  
The Greatest Show on Earth—if  
the mind survive and I be an American.

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